Automotive lift safety

The image of a falling vehicle is much too heavy to take lightly. Lack of training, operator error, neglected maintenance and failure to perform required inspections may cause vehicle lift-related accidents.

Whether you're using two-post lifts for cars and light trucks or in-ground lifts for school busses, follow these basic rules.

1. Provide mechanics with the proper training before authorizing them to operate lift equipment. If your facility uses more than one type of lift, training must be provided for each type. Users must know the maximum weight capacities, how the controls operate, lift safety features, rules for safe lifting, and good housekeeping procedures. Also ensure that all of the necessary safety labels and instruction postings are attached to the lift or located near the controls.
2. Lift operators should maintain a constant awareness of the hazards involved when lifting vehicles. Be aware of what is going on in the area around the lift and do not allow unauthorized persons to enter the lifting area.
3. Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment. Falling objects or debris is one of the hazards of working under elevated vehicles. Safety glasses should be worn to protect your eyes and a bump cap may be considered for protecting your head from the vehicle underbody.
4. Never exceed the maximum weight capacity of the lift. The rated capacity should be located on the lift in an easily seen location.
5. Always use the proper designated vehicle lifting points.
6. Ensure that the vehicle is properly centered and balanced on the lift.
7. When the vehicle is up on the lift ensure that the lift locking devices (latches) properly engage. Always raise the vehicle and then lower it onto the lift's mechanical locks.
8. When using drive-on lifts, make sure the wheels are properly chocked.
9. Clear the area around the lift of people, tools and equipment before lowering the vehicle.
10. If the lift is not working properly, do not use it. Report problems to the supervisor and inform others not to use it until it has been repaired. The lift must be locked or tagged out until the problem has been determined and qualified automotive lift service personnel have made appropriate repairs.
11. Have only qualified personnel repair or modify your lifts. Worn or damaged parts should be replaced only with parts supplied by the manufacturer.
12. Follow the lift manufacturer’s guidelines for inspection and maintenance procedures.
13. Document and keep records on file of all inspections, each lift’s service and repair history and the training history of each lift operator.
14. When purchasing a new lift it should be ALI/ETL certified and will have a gold certification label as pictured.
More on inspection and training

Daily inspections performed prior to the operation of the lift should be performed by the owner. Monthly inspections by the owner are also suggested. An automotive lift should be inspected by a qualified inspector at least annually, more frequently when so specified by the manufacturer or the authority having jurisdiction. The National Standard addressing automotive lift inspection is American National Standards Institute (ANSI) / Automotive Lift Institute (ALI) (current edition) "Safety Requirements for the Operation, Inspection, and Maintenance of Automotive Lifts". This National Consensus Standard provides guidance to the owner, employer, and lift service and inspection provider(s) with regard to the required qualifications, training, reporting, and documentation for operators, inspectors, and maintenance personnel. This Standard also provides sample forms and checklists for use by all parties attempting to comply with this Standard.

Contact the original equipment manufacturer identified on the nameplate of your automotive lift to obtain assistance with your inspection or service needs.

Personal injury and damage to a vehicle or the lift itself can be prevented if the proper precautions are taken. For more information see the Automotive Lift Institute’s web page at: www.autolift.org