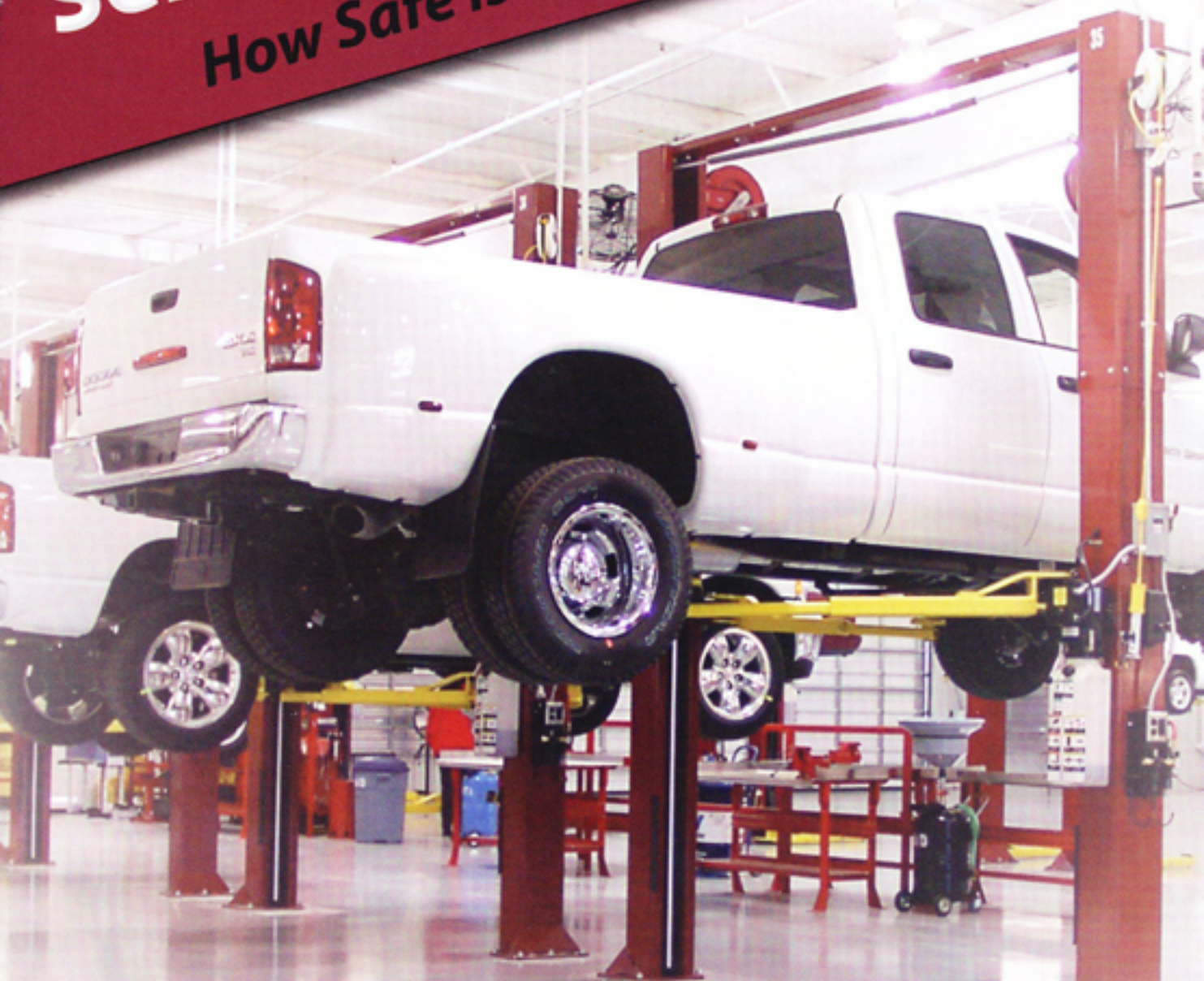


# Service Bay Safety

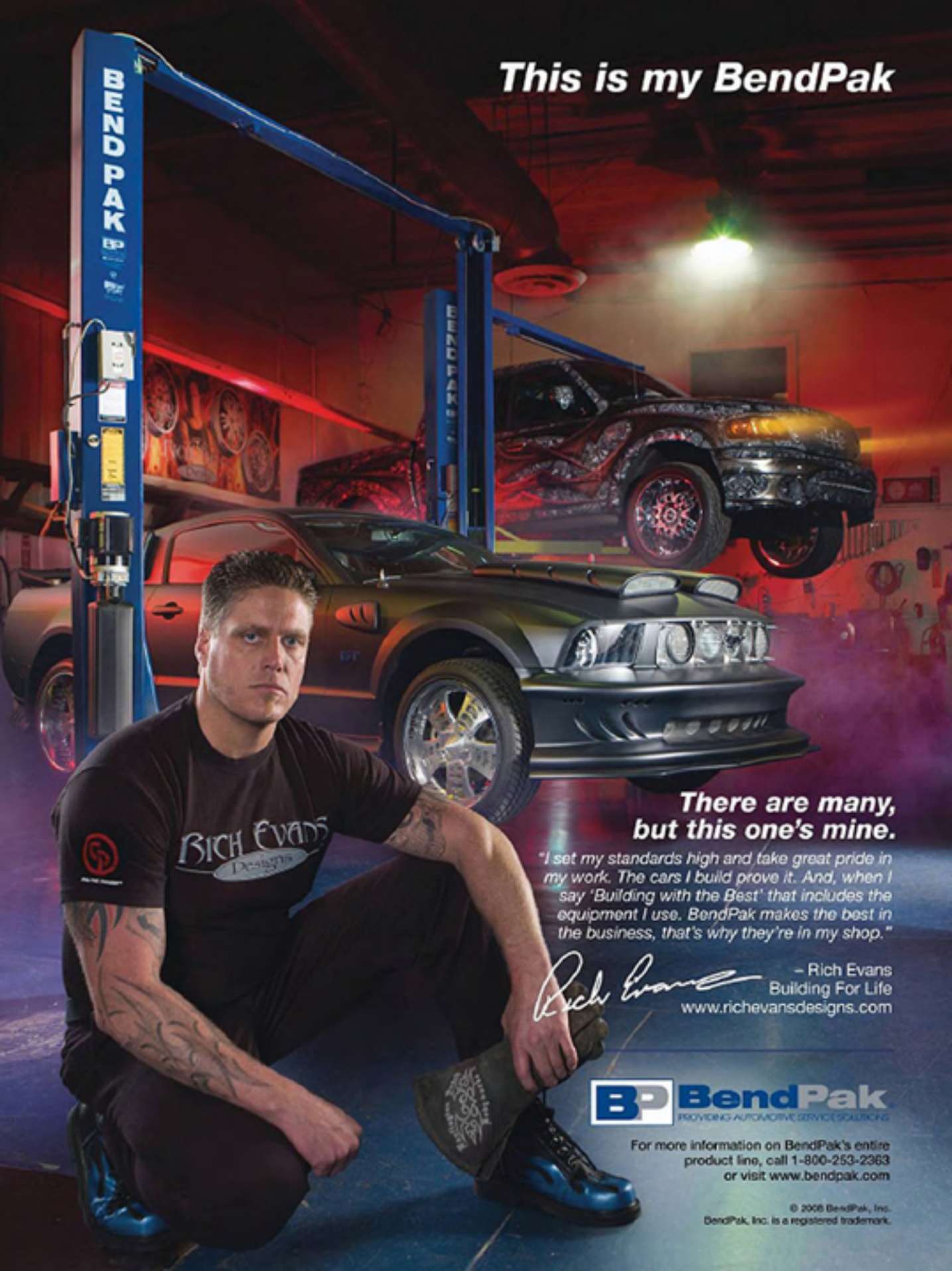
How Safe is Your Shop?



- OSHA — Making the business case for safety
- Automotive lift safety and the global economy
- Vehicle lifting: Points to remember
- Understanding the value of third-party lift certification
- An interview with ALI's president



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# OSHA—Making the business case for safety

Automobiles have come a long way in design, workmanship and production since Henry Ford rolled out the first Model T in 1908. As an advocate of innovation, Ford would likely marvel at today's selection of vehicles, technological advances, and the many gadgets and options that customers can select to fit their needs and preferences.

These four-wheeled machines require qualified engineers and mechanics to understand the intricacies of how they work. Though today's vehicles differ in appearance and function to some degree, the equipment and tools to repair them are virtually the same, and so are the requirements for workplace safety and health.

Automotive repair shop employers must ensure that their employees possess and maintain a comprehensive understanding of how to operate their equipment and follow procedures when working with hazardous materials, cleaning solvents and other potentially dangerous fluids.

For example, aerial lifts, sometimes called hydraulic lifts or jacks, are used to lower or raise work platforms or objects of significant weight. Automobile shops often use lifts to elevate vehicles to make repairs. Standing underneath a 3,000-pound mass of metal can be very risky. Among other hazards, mechanics face severe injury if an improv-

erly secured aerial lift malfunctions.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2005 there were 1.5 injury and illness lift-related incidents for every 10,000 full-time automotive repair and maintenance employees. In that same year, eight fatal occupational injuries involving jacks (lifts) occurred. In 2006, the rate for lift-related injury and illness incidents increased to 4.6, while the number of fatal occupational injuries involving jacks rose to 13.

Our mission at OSHA is to assure safe and healthful working conditions for America's working men and women. To accomplish this mission, OSHA has developed a wide variety of resources to assist employers and employees with the best practices and most effective approaches to create and maintain a safe work environment.

Businesses in the U.S. incur an estimated cost of \$170 billion a year from occupational injuries and illnesses – about \$1,300 per employee. Increases in injuries and illnesses result in higher workers' compensation costs, decreased productivity, possible government fines and legal fees, and increased employee turnover, all leading to a negative impact on a company's bottom line. This is not to be overshadowed by the personal impact on injured employees and their families.

OSHA's Safety and

Health Topics page, "Making the Business Case for Workplace Safety and Health" (<http://www.osha.gov/dcspp/products/topics/businesscase/index.html>), highlights the significant economic benefits employers can achieve while also fulfilling their safety and health responsibilities. The page provides free resources, safety and health information and case studies to help employers succeed. Many OSHA Alliance Program participants contribute to this topics page, sharing their expertise and experience to develop valuable guidance and training materials to reduce occupational injuries and illnesses.

Compliance with safety and health requirements is part of doing business the right way. Employers will find many useful resources on OSHA's Compliance Assistance web page ([http://www.osha.gov/dcspp/compliance\\_assistance/index.html](http://www.osha.gov/dcspp/compliance_assistance/index.html)), including free information on work-related injury and illness prevention, compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and OSHA's cooperative programs.

Businesses, such as automobile repair shops and distributors, can benefit from OSHA's Alliance and On-site Consultation Programs. Through its Alliance with OSHA, the Automotive Lift Institute (ALI) has shared its expertise in developing automo-



tive lift training courses; safety tip cards and vehicle lifting guides; and a Safety Video Kit.

OSHA's On-site Consultation Program features a free, confidential, informational session with an OSHA consultant who advises employers of potential hazards at their worksites and on ways to improve their occupational safety and health management systems.

These helpful programs represent a small number of the vast resources OSHA provides to businesses nationwide. The OSHA and ALI Alliance has made substantial progress in spreading the message that employers in the automotive industry who invest in a safety and health management system for their workplace can lower their workers' compensation premiums, reduce employee turnover, increase labor productivity and, most importantly, increase profits.

Maintaining a safe and healthful workplace just makes good business sense. Henry Ford would be proud.

*Edwin C. Foulke Jr. is the assistant secretary of labor for OSHA.*





# Automotive lift safety and the global economy

As those familiar with industrial safety issues well know, Federal, state, and provincial laws cited throughout North America traditionally lag behind industry consensus standards. Surprising examples of this can be seen in the automotive industry as it relates to important components such as brake hoses and safety glass. Closer to home for a service technician or shop owner, we find that within the automotive lift industry the National Safety Standards are technically known as "Voluntary Consensus Standards". In general terms, this implies, at least on the surface, that unless an "authority having jurisdiction" (AHJ) mandates compliance, there are little if any ramifications beyond legal activity that can be linked to knowingly producing or offering a product that fails to conform to the voluntary consensus standard.

Consider this lag as it becomes coupled with today's truly global economy, which as most purchasers are now aware from traditional consumer examples, competes more often on price and volume with varying degrees of compromise in quality. The situation, as described, finds seemingly reputable manufacturers who are interested in product safety, stuck in the gap between choosing to comply with the current voluntary national safety standard or building the product to withdrawn standards in order to comply with an out of date regulation. This seemingly tough situation quickly becomes

exacerbated by constant concern for the market's sensitivity to non compliant product which, at first glance, looks like a good deal for the consumer. In my experience to date, more times than not these products are introduced by import companies, web based distributors, foreign manufacturing and even some North American based companies - all of whom are either unaware of current standards activities and regulations or they simply don't care because the lift industry has not been on the radar of regulatory and code enforcement officials.

Fortunately, a new day has dawned (so to speak) in the area of automotive lift safety. AHJs are beginning to better understand the importance of their roles and of code enforcement within the automotive service and repair environment. They are embracing the life saving value associated with conducting a detailed site assessment. As noted previously within this article, an AHJ by definition is the Authority Having Jurisdiction - in plain terms this is the individual or entity holding the decision making authority. With regard to automotive lift compliance, a national chain typically has a designated corporate AHJ who may be an industrial Hygienist or another form of corporate health and safety officer who sets policy to insure the organization fully complies with federal, state, regional, or, in the case of operations taking place in Canada, provincial lift safety requirements.

Although generally speaking, a corporate designated AHJ is "trumped" in authority by those responsible for compliance with Federal, state, regional or provincial lift safety requirements, their role is critical as it sets the corporate tone for the work environment. In matters of automotive lift safety this individual acts as the first line of defense in areas of planned maintenance, inspections, training, and the selection of product that will comply with AHJ and code requirements.

## How does the AHJ gain the power to enforce standards?

**OSHA** - The National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act (NTTA) of 1995 was signed into law on March 7, 1996, it required that all Federal agencies use standards developed by accredited voluntary consensus standards bodies instead of government-unique standards whenever possible. With regard to automotive lift safety, this act allowed for the withdrawal of the long-standing Federal Specification entitled "OO-L-360, Lift, Motor Vehicle, Covering In-Ground Automotive Lifts". Perhaps, more importantly, it allowed OSHA to look favorably on, and to begin to reference those American National Standards developed in support of automotive lift safety when acting to investigate and issue citations involving automotive lifts. The basis for this action is through the application of OSHA's General Duty Clause [Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational

Safety and Health Act of 1970].

**State/Regional** - Since coverage regarding the Occupational Safety and Health act is provided either directly by the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) or by an OSHA-approved state job safety and health program, both state enforcement and regional code enforcement lift safety activities that were initially derived from this link to the health and safety act have continued to gain a greater audience with the code enforcement community. This is because of growing state building code adoptions of ANSI automotive lift safety standards and in particular the International Building Code's (IBC) 2003 and 2006 adoption's of "ANSI/ALI ALCTV - The American National Standard for Automotive Lifts - Safety Requirements For Construction, Testing, and Validation".

**Canada and Provincial Law** - Both Worksafe BC and The Ontario Ministry of Labour have seen fit to adopt "ANSI/ALI ALCTV - The American National Standard for Automotive Lifts - Safety Requirements For Construction, Testing, and Validation". In a move that is extremely favorable to workplace safety in the automotive service and repair industry, each of these organization took the additional step of mandating compliance with "ANSI/ALI ALOIM - The American National Standard for Automotive Lifts





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- Safety Requirements For Operation, Inspection, and Maintenance". Both Worksafe BC and The Ontario Ministry of Labour fulfill a role that is similar to U.S. OSHA.

### Does all this talk of regulation and product compliance mean anything?

As potentially dry as the last few paragraphs may be to most who find themselves reading this article, these points are key in our understanding of just how much activity, time, and effort has been put forth in consideration of the safety of those working under a vehicle raised on an automotive lift. A recent Bureau of Labor statistic demonstrated that automotive service technicians and mechanics are more likely than the average worker to be injured or killed on the job. The report goes on to state that between 2003

and 2005, 147 mechanics were killed on the job - a staggering 5.3 per 100,000 workers in 2005, compared to 4.0 for all other occupations combined!

Still today, there remains strong evidence of web based importers, distributors, after-market parts suppliers and manufacturers who claim to put your safety first; yet in reality, they prey on unknowing shop owners, purchasing agents, and technicians by offering products brazenly proclaiming compliance with withdrawn standards or, in some cases, boldly demonstrating a business decision which portrays knowledge of, - yet a clear lack of compliance with those safety standards that were developed with the health and safety interests of the end user in mind.

I suspect, the reasons our global economy works to

the advantage of so many who manufacture products of questionable quality and safety, can be linked to our buying habits as consumers....we want it faster and cheaper, we don't think about things that shouldn't be in the mix and we think someone is "watching" or "protecting" us from things such as lead filled toys or contamination in food products. With this mind set we don't think about the possibility of an automotive lift containing low grade steel, welders who are not properly trained, or the idea that a product design may not be sufficient to do the job and actually keep you safe. The good news for those who work under vehicles raised on an automotive lift is that the gap between those voluntary consensus standards and the regulations promulgated by federal, state, and provincial laws is quickly being

bridged by your state inspectors and building code officials. As more municipalities become familiar with applicable state building codes, OSHA's General Duty Clause, and the IBC's automotive lift compliance requirements; those in manufacturing and product distribution who remain unwilling to stop cutting corners in the area of end user safety will be held accountable. Until then it is a buyer beware environment and your best bet is to educate yourself and your staff before you make a buying decision.

R.W. (Bob) O'Gorman  
is the president of the  
Automotive Lift Institute.  
More information about auto-  
motive lift safety, including a  
list of frequently asked ques-  
tions, can be viewed at [www.  
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# Vehicle lifting: Points to remember

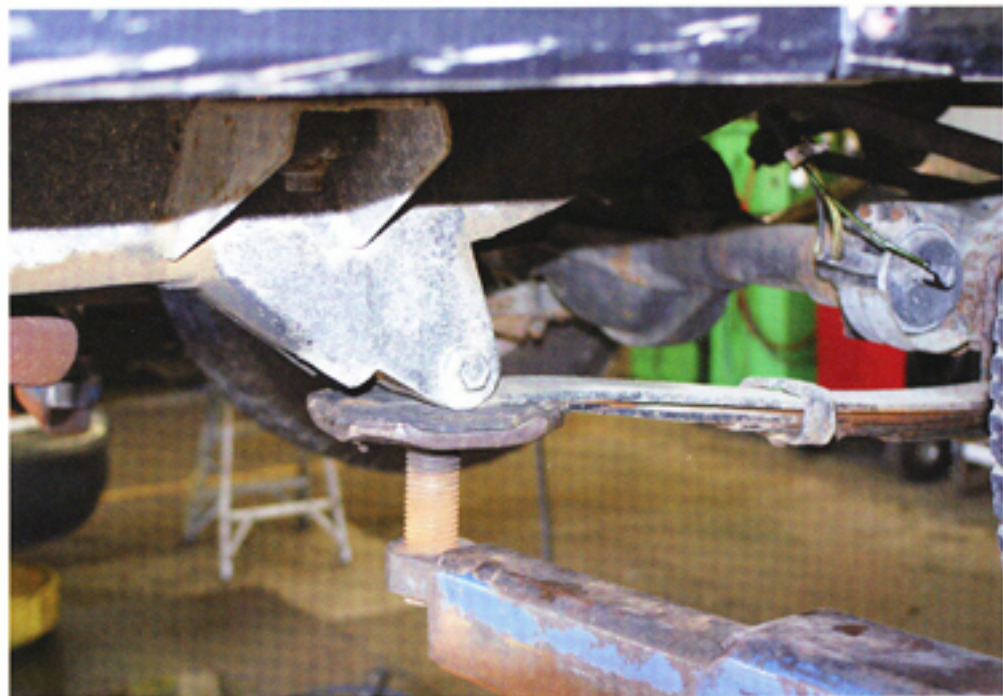
Where do you get your lift point information? When you need to go under a vehicle to diagnose or perform required vehicle service, where do you obtain information for the placement of the lift adapter pads? Are you confident your sources are reliable?

If you believe you haven't seen a vehicle you don't know how to lift or that everything is just common sense, you're destined for an accident. Don't assume that lifting is the same from vehicle to vehicle. Unfortunately, this is often the statement heard from experienced service technicians: "It doesn't matter if it's a roadster, an SUV, a 4x4 with duals, a two-door or four-door family sedan, or even a truck. All you have to do is find a hard spot like the frame or the jack points on a unibody car. Sure, it's important if the hard spot is flat and level but, in a pinch, it's okay to use the spring hangers. They're connected to the frame aren't they? Some vehicle manufacturers even tell you to lift on the spring hangers."

This is a risky assumption and one likely to lead to an accident.

There's quite a bit of information out there, so how do you know what to follow? Bottom line, if one source doesn't seem quite right, seek out another source and always use good old common sense! If something doesn't jibe with what you're reading, always question it. You are your best safety source; don't ignore your own sensibilities.

The first step in making a proper lift is to find the vehicle manufacturer rec-



Adapter in contact with spring and hanger. DO NOT LIFT HERE.

ommended lifting points for that vehicle. Here are a few common sources of reliable lift point information:

- If you work in an automobile dealership, you can go to the internal vehicle manufacturer web site to find lifting and jacking information. You can also go to the vehicle service manuals found in dealerships where the same make of vehicles are serviced every day.
- If you work in an independent shop, franchise store, or fleet maintenance operation, maybe you have the service manuals for the vehicle at issue and maybe you don't. Check to see if your employer subscribes to one of the independent, on-line vehicle information services. Some of these

services cover proper vehicle lifting.

- The Vehicle Lifting Point Guide, published by Motor Information Systems for the Automotive Lift Institute (ALI) and furnished since 1997 by ALI member companies with all new, frame-engaging lifts. The Lifting Point Guide is developed from information obtained directly from the vehicle manufacturers and is available in paperback and CD-ROM.

Have you ever seen a vehicle slide off of a lift? It's not a pretty sight, especially if the service technician is under the falling vehicle. Don't be an accident statistic. Take enough time to examine the vehicle you're going to lift, so that it's safe to go under. Exercise your

own independent discretion and judgment. Don't rely exclusively on these source materials without thinking for yourself.

Here are a few questions and tips you should always ask yourself when lifting a vehicle:

1. Think about the center of gravity for the specific vehicle you're working on. Are you lifting a short wheelbase roadster, a passenger car, a stretch limousine, or a plumbing truck?
2. Think about the contents of the vehicle you're working on in terms of balance. What's in the truck box? What's in the pickup with the camper cover? What's in the trunk of the family sedan? Could it be bags of concrete for a weekend project?





Adapter in contact with hanger only. OK TO LIFT HERE.

adapter surfaces steel or rubber? Are there features on the adapters that would inhibit lateral movement? Do you need to use extenders to prevent swing arm contact with sills, rocker panels, pipes, dams, steps or running boards?

6. What about lifting on the spring hangers? The vehicle manufacturer says that's okay in some cases. If you place the adapter on the spring hanger, does the spring rest on part of the adapter pad? If the leaf spring is on the adapter, the vehicle can walk right off of the adapter if it is rocked up and down. After all, a spring is exactly that, a spring. It isn't a hard, flat, level surface. Further, how many spring hangers have you seen that are flat on the bottom where you'll be placing the adapter pad? Does this seem like a safe lift point to you? However, due to the upsweep of the frame forward of the rear suspension on some long wheelbase vehicles, the front most rear spring hanger may be your only practical choice. Certainly you would not place the adapter on the frame upsweep. It is far from level. If you select the spring hanger as the lift point, be sure the adapter is not supporting the vehicle on the spring itself and, always use vehicle support stands.
7. Never use blocks (wood or other materials) between the adapters and the vehicle lift points, even if the vehicle manufacturer

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3. Think about the work you'll be doing and how it can shift the weight of the vehicle. Will you be removing heavy components from the vehicle? Should you use vehicle support stands to stabilize the lifted load?
4. Never assume the lift swing arm restraints will keep the arms from coming out from under the vehicle. If the adapters aren't placed on a flat, level surface, the horizontal force developed on the adapter pad can be greater than the vertical force applied to it. Swing arm restraints are only designed to resist 150 pounds of horizontal force.
5. Take the adapter design into consideration. Does your lift have flip-up adapters, screw-type adapters or stacking adapters? Are the



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recommends them. The use of blocks can only lead to instability.

8. Never lift one end of a vehicle using only two swing arms of a swing arm style lift.
9. If the adapter pads on the lift won't reach the recommended vehicle lift points, use a different lift.

Let's talk a little bit about vehicles lifted on the two-post, fore-and-aft, movable piston, wheel and axle engaging lifts. Admittedly there are far fewer of these lifts in service than two-post swing arm lifts but, some strange things are attempted on these lifts.

One condition is where the technician only lifts the rear of the vehicle to provide greater access to the engine compartment. If the front wheels are free to roll on the floor, the horizontal forces applied to the rear jack are equal and opposite to the breakaway friction and rolling friction of the front wheels (this includes pulling the front wheels out of the locating depressions). Doing this will surely damage the rear jack. In addition, this force will increase substantially if the front wheels are chocked. It can be seen that as the rear axle is lifted with axle adapters or, as the rear wheels are lifted with wheel adapters, the vehicle stability will become solely dependent upon the security of the engagement between the vehicle rear lift points and the rear lift adapters.

Another condition is where the front jack and the rear jack are set at different levels while supporting the lifted vehicle. This condition is potentially damaging to both the front jack and the rear jack. As can be seen, if the vehicle is origi-

nally lifted by the axles or the wheels, the rear jack is located by the position of the rear axle and the front jack is located by the position of the front axle. If the vehicle is held level there is no force developed to try to change the jack spacing but, if the vehicle is caused to become tilted there are forces developed that try to pull the front and rear jack toward each other.

The requirement for out of level condition stated in ANSI/ALI ALCTV, Standard for Automotive Lifts—Safety Requirements for Construction, Testing and Validation is: "...Superstructure synchronization devices shall maintain the lifted load horizontal within two (2) degrees side-to-side and three (3) degrees front-to-rear for frame engaging and axle and chassis engaging lifts, and five (5) degrees side-to-side and two (2) degrees front-to-rear for runway and wheel engaging lifts."

As can be seen the out of level condition should be limited on any two-post, fore-and-aft, movable-jack, axle or wheel engaging lift to (3) degrees front to rear or, rear to front. In any case the lifted vehicle should always be lowered onto its latches before going under the vehicle. As always, additional confidence may be gained by placement of the vehicle on vehicle support stands.

Another problem with this style lift is that with heavy duty, and four wheel drive vehicles, it is often difficult to establish good contact with the front lift adapters because there is a front gear case, or longitudinal suspension members in the way of making axle contact.

If you think about what

you're doing and think several steps ahead, you'll be your own best safety advocate. There are some hard and fast rules that could help keep you safe if you follow them. For instance, in 1992, the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) published a standard that recommended that automobile manufacturers identify the recommended vehicle lifting points by placing a triangular hole, boss or depression at each of the four lifting points. This standard has been in existence for 15 years, but only a handful of manufacturers have actually incorporated these lifting point identification marks. This is regrettable, but, even if the marks were in universal use, it wouldn't relieve you from using your own thought process.

So whom do you trust? Trust yourself to analyze each lift carefully. Think ahead and don't take printed safety materials at face value. Remember, you're the one who'll be under the raised vehicle, so trust your own instincts. A little time spent in lifting point selection can save your life.

Finally, before going under the vehicle, make one last check of all four adapters, to make sure they're engaged securely with the lift points you've selected.

*Rick Heath is an industry safety consultant specializing in automotive service facilities. He may be contacted through his website at [www.heathandassociates.com](http://www.heathandassociates.com) or by email at [igheath@bellsouth.net](mailto:igheath@bellsouth.net).*

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# Understanding the value of third-party lift certification

Lift certification: What is it? What does a certified lift mean to you, as the purchaser? In basic terms, a certified product is a product that has had a representative specimen tested, and is under continued follow-up inspections by a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory, as defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In electrical jargon, per the National Electrical Code, NFPA 70 of the United States, this is equivalent to the term "Listed." By having a certified product on your shop floor, whether it be a single lift in a small shop, more than one lift in a car dealership, or a lift for the do-it-yourself "weekend wrencher," you can be assured that your certified product meets a consensus standard for safety. A standard that is used by all prudent lift manufacturers' to design and construct their lifts is ANSI/ALI ALCTV-2006. That's a lot of letters, but each is an important part of the whole, and each part ensures that each certified product meets the minimum requirements of that standard. To break it down, let's look at each acronym. ANSI stands for the American National Standards Institute, which is the governing body for the issuance of more than 35,000 standards in the United States, standards which run the gamut from Abamectin and Abbreviation to Zinc Plating and Zoalene. These standards include Safety, Performance, Materials, Procedures, and Testing.

ANSI is also an accreditation body for certification programs, such as that offered by Intertek, which is a NRTL for hundreds of different standards for safety. ALI is the acronym for the Automotive Lift Institute. ALI's mission is to promote the safe design, construction, installation and use of automotive lift products, with its primary goal is to promote lift safety and reduce lift-related accidents, damage, injury, and on occasion, death. ALCTV just doesn't flow off the tongue, but its meaning is clear as the standard for Automotive Lift Construction, Testing, and Validation. The ANSI/ALI ALCTV standard's consensus body is composed of manufacturers, users, testing laboratories, regulatory agencies, insurers and installers. Any changes to the standard must be approved by the consensus body to ensure that any groups' agenda is not carried over into the standard—sort of a standards-writing checks and balances, if you will.

So we know what certification is. We know that it requires compliance to a standard. We know that it requires an NRTL to be valid. But why is a certified lift needed? With insurance premiums on the rise as a result of liability claims reaching staggering figures, insurance companies and building officials are not willing to assume the risk of ensuring a lift is safe on their own. They are increasingly requiring that any product, including automotive lifts, be certified for new construction installation or for continued

use during insurance walk-throughs. A listing of certified lifts and information relating to lift certification is available at [www.autolift.org](http://www.autolift.org). Sadly, accidents do happen, but the overwhelming majority of them are related to improper use by the operator, lack of training, or poor maintenance.

A lift certification is dependent on the type of product being certified. If it is an "old-style" air-over-oil in-ground lift, the certification will only be to ANSI/ALI ALCTV, as the standard deals only with the mechanical aspects of a lift, including pneumatics, hydraulics, and structural metal fabrications. In recent years, in-ground lifts have lost sales to the two-post surface mounted lift as a result of environmental concerns relating to leakage of the buried lift components. The surface mounted lifts created a new market, and a new problem—the use of electrical components to provide the motive force instead of air pressure. With the electrical components, a standard was required to ensure that electrical safety was considered. The standard currently enforced in the United States is ANSI/UL 201, which is the Standard for Safety of Garage Equipment, and is a publication of Underwriters' Laboratories. Being an ANSI standard, it is a consensus standard as well, with members from similar sections of the industry as with the ALCTV standard. Similarly, our neighbors to the North in Canada rely upon CAN/CSA C22.2 No. 68 as the governing electrical standard

for that country. This standard is titled Motor-Operated Appliances (Household and Commercial), and is again a consensus standard. All electrical safety evaluations for these countries must be performed by a NRTL for the United States, and in Canada by a Certification Organization as defined by the Standards Council of Canada. Intertek maintains the status for both countries, and also provides testing and certification services for many other countries in addition.

Many code enforcement jurisdictions in the United States and Canada now require all automotive lifts installed within their regulatory influence to be certified in order to reduce workplace injury. All lifts certified to ANSI/ALI ALCTV are required to have ultimate material strengths at least equal to three times the stresses the lifts are subjected to in normal use.

When you purchase a certified lift, you have purchased not only the pieces of steel, rubber, and aluminum that makes up the physical lift, but you have also purchased that lift manufacturers' many years of manufacturing expertise, the lift designers know-how, and the NRTL's engineering and inspection experience.

A manufacturer that makes a certified lift is required to have a quality system that ensures that each product is made the same way each time, so even though the lift you purchase was not tested by the NRTL engineer, it is considered to be the same





**Lift tip 1: Certified lifts are identified by a Certification Mark, such as one of those shown at left. The top label indicates compliance with ANSI/ALI ALCTV and ANSI/UL 201. The middle label indicates compliance with ANSI/ALI ALCTV, ANSI/UL 201 and CAN/CSA C22.2 No. 68. The bottom indicates compliance with ANSI/ALI ALCTV only.**

**Lift tip 2: Though lifts are designed to prevent injury, it is up to the lift operator to ensure that it is being properly used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.**

**Lift tip 3: Presently, each ALI-certified lift model is required to be retested for compliance with ANSI/ALI ALCTV every five years.**

due to the quality system employed by the manufacturer. All product complaints that involve a product that does not comply with the standard are resolved on an ongoing basis, resulting in continuous process, and indeed product, improvement.

A manufacturer cannot simply pay the NRTL for the privilege to apply a certification mark, they must earn that by proving their designer is qualified, their welders are qualified, their manufacturing process will make a consistent product, and by having the NRTL inspectors perform a factory audit at least two times per year to ensure that they are still following the certification program procedures. A certified lift design is the culmination of many hundreds of man-hours spent

designing a structure suitable for lifting and holding a motor vehicle suspended for a period of time. Each lift is designed specifically for its purpose, whether for brakes, tires, exhaust, chassis work, or body work. To determine which lift is best for you, you need to know the type of work you primarily intend to perform. One thing is certain; any suitable type of automotive lift is available in a certified version. Don't sell yourself short by skimping on a lift that is not certified.

*Dale W. Soos is an engineering team leader at Intertek, a leading international provider of quality and safety services to a wide range of global and local industries. Email Dale at dale.soos@intertek.com, or visit www.intertek-etlsemko.com.*



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# An interview with ALI's president

The ongoing quest associated with grasping and improving the needs of an industry both energizes and engages ALI's President and CEO, R.W. (Bob) O'Gorman.

Founded very soon after WWII, when the U.S. Department of Commerce initiated a program to develop design standards for a number of industrial products, the Automotive Lift Institute was formed and began to represent the needs associated with automotive lift safety and a growing industry. Today's ALI, not unlike so many other industry related associations operating in support of the North American market, fulfills a safety communications and educational role within our society that is vital to the lift user community.

Early in 2000, ALI's Board of Directors met with the association management firm, entrusted for so many years to

conduct the day to day operations associated with ALI. The result—at the recommendation of the management firm, the board devised a plan, which for the first time in ALI history would include dedicated association employees to carry out the tasks associated with an organization in need of revitalization.

The Board quickly formed a search committee and charged them with the task of finding a staff head that ALI could call their own. Former Board Chairman Gary Kenyon (Rotary Lift) and current Chairman Jerome Lentz (Challenger Lifts) both recalled four years of tedious planning, searching, and travel with other transi-

tion team members to conduct interviews.

When a decision was finally made in mid-2004, ALI tapped R.W. (Bob) O'Gorman to lead the Institute into the future. A husband, father of four, Harley owner and avid outdoor sports enthusiast, O'Gorman is a Gulf War veteran who has traveled the world extensively—both with the military and in his role immediately prior to joining ALI—where he was titled as General Manager and Global Liaison, charged with responsibilities spanning more than twelve countries and supporting perhaps North America's largest "big box" product quality and import departments.

These questions and answers with O'Gorman provide a clearer understanding of how ALI is making a difference in working to further improve on the issue of workplace safety as it relates to the automotive lift industry.

**Q: What is the mission of ALI and what has been done to fulfill this objective?**

ALI: As presented on ALI's recently updated website, the mission of the Institute has always been to promote the safe design, construction, installation and use of automotive lifts in North America.

In my view, the cornerstone of ALI's success can be credited to the standards development activities pursued in cooperation with the American National Standards Institute. Working primarily through the consensus process, the association has developed American National Standards governing the design, construction, testing and validation of automotive lifts. Perhaps more exciting from a lift user and training standpoint, ALI has also devel-

oped safety standards governing the operation, inspection and maintenance of automotive lifts. The association has also successfully developed consensus standards generically addressing the minimum installation and service requirements supporting automotive lifts.

**Q: What are the American National Standards?**

ALI: American National Standards refers to standards that have been developed under the stringent rules of a Nationally Recognized Standards Development Organization—the American National Standards Institute. In order to become an ANSI-accredited standards developer, ANSI requires standards developing organizations, such as ALI, to adhere to a strict and well-documented set of process requirements that provide for an open process, a balance of interested parties, and for participation by all materially affected parties. ANSI also requires a process where opposing viewpoints can be considered, consensus is achieved and appeals can be heard. ANSI regularly audits these organizations to ensure that the rules are being followed.

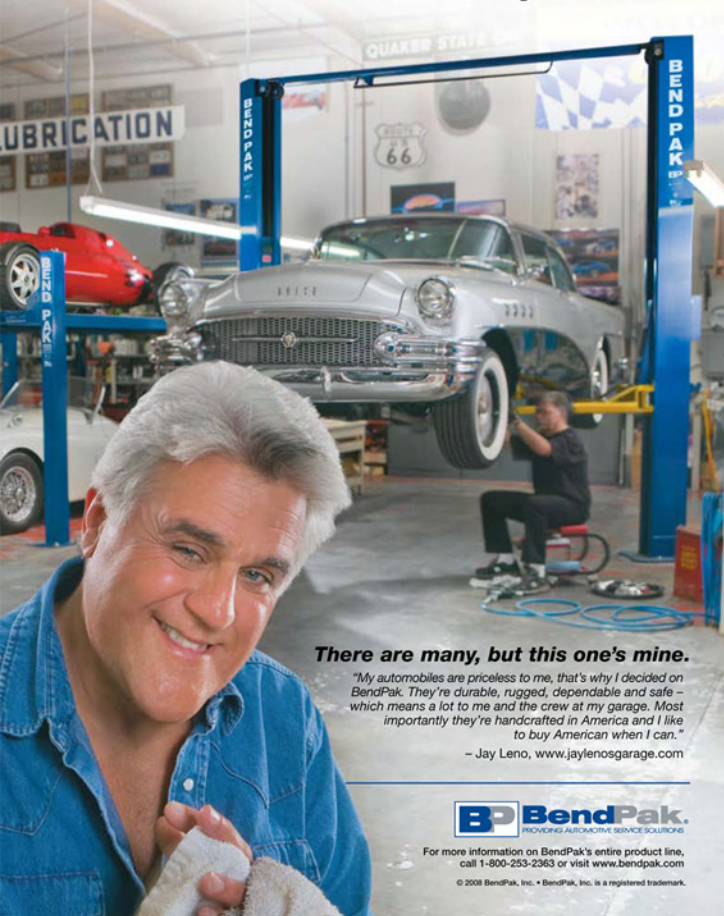
**Q: What else does ALI do to accomplish its mission?**

ALI: The Institute fulfills a much larger need, in that, ALI also publishes generic instructional booklets, videos and labels relating to the safe use of automotive lifts.

**Q: What are some of those products?**

ALI: The easiest thing to do is to check out the "ALI store" at [www.autolift.org](http://www.autolift.org). An important fact that I would be remiss in not sharing regarding a number

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- Jay Leno, [www.jaylenosgarage.com](http://www.jaylenosgarage.com)



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of our safety pieces relates to a decision in the late 1980s to contract with the National Safety Council to perform a survey of lift manufacturers in order to gather anecdotal information relating to lift accident experiences. This data was then used to prepare the generic lift safety manual "Lifting It Right," along with a companion video (now hosted by NASCAR legends Richard and Kyle Petty, and fully endorsed by the National Safety Council) suitable for use by employers and vocational instructors to train those working in a shop with regard to the safe use of automotive lifts.

That same NSC survey resulted in information that was used for the development of a series of generic warning labels for use on different types of automotive lifts. These labels were developed and tested on a large focus group of automotive service technicians by the University of Michigan's Traffic Research Institute. This careful process led to the warning labels that have been applied to ALI member company lift products and to other lift manufacturers who recognize their importance since as early as 1992.

**Q: Independent product certification seems to be a growing trend in North America. Will we see more of this approach in the lift business?**

ALI: I certainly hope so. Because of certain "maverick" companies that decided to go into the lift business with marginal concern for safety, ALI developed an independent third-party product certification program in the early 1990s. This program engages two OSHA Accredited Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories authorized by ALI to evaluate submitted lift products. Since the inception of this program Certified automotive lifts have received wide acceptance in the marketplace,

by regulatory bodies such as OSHA and by other Authorities Having Jurisdiction, such as building code officials. As a condition of membership, ALI member companies must now use a third party to certify 75 percent of the products that they offer for sale in North America—this alone represents a tangible improvement in the number of certified lifts in the marketplace and an increase of 5 percent over last year's requirement of 70 percent.

**Q: What changes have come to ALI since you took over in January 2005?**

ALI: Within four months of my joining ALI, the membership agreed to relocate ALI headquarters. Although I initially looked into moving everything to Washington, D.C., and taking a seat at the "traditional table" where associations work and play, the reality that ALI differs from other associations in that it truly represents the safety needs of the working man (and woman) remained in the forefront and so we relocated in central New York, which in part helps the membership and certification program participants as they often visit with the largest of the testing laboratories that operates within this region.

In addition to the physical move, we streamlined and eliminated the vice president's position in favor of a Technical Liaison's role, and, after approval from our accrediting agency, put updated policies and requirements in place which allowed for the re-organization of our operating committees. Today the Institute's committees are quite active and include a larger audience of participation from both the technical and marketing disciplines of our member companies. The newly formed committees include a very active Public Relations committee, a Strategic Planning team, and the Safety & Standards Technical Committee. A few

other committees that existed before have been refreshed and continue to serve the organization well.

To address the industry's need to put forth a strong safety and training awareness message that could begin to enable a change in mentality to one of a "life safety" focus within the automotive service and repair industry, we developed and launched ALI's Strategic Safety Alliance Program. BFRC was the first to commit with the Tire Industry Association and the New Hampshire NADA second and then third respectively. Admittedly, bandwidth has just recently become an issue; meaning that staff has less time to dedicate toward further expanding this very successful program. Still, the program continues to grow in that there are approximately a half dozen agreements under review. Further evidence of success

and networking for a strong safety message can be demonstrated through our ability to build from this concept into partnering with OSHA's South Dakota Regional Office to establish an OSHA-sponsored Alliance involving the three Auto Dealer Associations that support the region.

There are many behind-the-scenes improvements that have a tangible value to those actively involved in either the membership or the lift certification program. These changes receive oversight and approval by our accreditation and quality auditors. While detailed discussion of these points would have little or no value to the lift-use community, other policy changes such as the acceptance of major credit cards, shipping of orders within 24 hours, and the addition of internet-based sales are welcome improvements by the lift



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user and safety community.

Since almost everything we do within the Institute is intertwined with lift safety at the core, it made sense to move the board and the membership to embrace a professional agency to engage our committees and Technical Liaison's office with the purpose of leading a project to redesign and update the information available on our website. I am so thankful for the high quality individuals who actively engaged in the work of the association's public relations committee and for those within the association's membership that offered their expertise and opinions. The association website is located at [www.autolift.org](http://www.autolift.org).

**Q: What future initiatives will the Institute pursue?**

ALI: We have identified an area of interest in the lift installation and service sector. Assuming the association can develop an independent program and there is enough interest in offering lift inspection to the customer base, and, if those involved would do so on a fair and equitable basis without unreasonably condemning competitor products, we think that they could offer an extremely valuable service to their customers and contribute greatly to lift safety.

The development of this concept—a new program for lift service providers wherein they could become certified in lift inspection, as opposed to the model today of “self-declared” compliance with the national standard. This program is in the planning stages and may someday result in the expansion of ALI membership to include the community of certified lift inspectors.

**Q: How does ALI interact with current users of automotive lifts and with potential purchasers?**

ALI: Awareness and education is our mantra when addressing either of these

audiences. Our website, [www.autolift.org](http://www.autolift.org), has quickly become our No. 1 form of outreach. The design and the layout are intended to be comprehensive, yet easily understood and accessed. For example, the site hosts a detailed “FAQ” section, articles and papers of general interest about lifting, and, of course, a list of “Certified” lifts. Although not unique to web-based technologies, ALI's website visitors can link to other relevant organizations through this site—contact with a member company or their website is a useful example that appears to have a high percentage of use.

**Q: How does ALI handle problems?**

ALI: In my personal experience, the term “problems” can be rather vague. Industry concerns that we see most often can be categorized for the most part as either formal complaints or general inquiries. We try to promptly respond to all inquiries that are made in good faith. Many inquiries received are technical in nature or have to do with determining the Certification of products—that is to say they relate to whether or not a product is really “Certified” as the seller claims. We often help the inquirer find the information that he or she needs on the ALI website. For example, the “FAQ” section of our site can be found under the topic “Buying a lift.” This portion of the site is a high-traffic area with visitors utilizing it to independently verify or get a handle on statements and claims that exist in the industry.

In addition to supporting general industry inquiries, we have a formal complaint procedure that allows for a means to investigate and resolve legitimate issues that may involve an ALI “Certified” lift. Every accredited third-party certification program is required by

the accrediting agency to have an approved process such as this and I believe it provides the consumer with another avenue that simply is not available when a non-certified lift is obtained.

**Q: What about imports?**

ALI: Automotive lifts have been imported from the highly industrialized countries in Europe and Japan for decades. When the certification program began, ALI required that foreign manufacturers have a corporate presence in North America in order to qualify for membership in ALI. This was required so that if there were issues associated with the imported products, the North American purchaser would not be left with an abstract piece of artwork, but rather they would have ready access to the responsible party and would not have to go half-way around the world to obtain satisfaction. Recent news stories spanning across many industries lend tremendous credibility to this approach. Perhaps the most notable being that of the tire industry's case involving the distributor operating out of New Jersey.

**Q: That case involves a Chinese import. What about lifts coming from China?**

ALI: There are some who might say that the North American lift market was “invaded” a few years ago by China, but to be more accurate we have to address new and emerging Far East lift manufacturers: the countries represented include the People's Republic of China, and, to a lesser degree, Vietnam and South Korea. Not unlike North America's first experience with imports from this region, one only has to look to the majority of web-based sellers of lifts to understand a similar situation continues to exist as the vast majority operating without consideration of ALI's message and efforts seem to compete heavily on price and

fail to demonstrate the ability to deliver a lift with evidence of electrical, mechanical, and hazard-warning compliance required within national safety standards.

But there is good news. Much has happened since this “second wave” of Far Eastern manufacturing took place, mostly due to market pressures and the wide acceptance of “Certified” lifts in North America. Today, responsible companies from all over the globe are moving to establish relationships with existing domestic lift manufacturers and other credible Western sources able to address the quality and safety needs of this market. This increasing trend allows for a significant number of North American lift manufacturers to fulfill their need to follow current production trends in Asia, while maintaining Western-influenced quality programs at the Far Eastern-based factory. From the viewpoint of those operating in the Far East with product intended for our market, this approach allows for their designs to be influenced by the quality and safety needs of those familiar with North America's product requirements.

**Q: Any final advice on buying a lift?**

ALI: In closing, when obtaining a lift from the open market, be sure that regardless of country of origin, you and your purchasing agent are aware of the minimum safety requirements and the safety materials required as defined within the national standards. A few minutes of education to assure a clear understanding of the difference between a certified and a non-certified lift, as well as the implications associated with the two as they relate to your intended use and current code requirements, will better prepare you to make a good decision.



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