

LIFT-GATE SAFETY

- Lift-gates are potentially hazardous and should only be used by employees who have been trained or familiarized to operate them safely.
- Common injuries include amputated fingers and toes; crushed feet; a runaway load that falls over or off the lift-gate onto an employee trying to steady it either next to or below the load.
- Leaving the lift-gate extended and unattended at truck bed level poses a serious hazard. (Always put the lift-gate all the way up in the vertical position or leave it flat on the ground.)
- Marking the corners of the lift-gate with a fluorescent cone or flashing light is required.

Equipment Safety Considerations

- Use a self-leveling lift-gate that keeps the load level to prevent dropped cargo.
- A truck with a lift-gate operated by remote control that can be used while standing on the gate or on the ground, whichever is better in the current circumstances. Remember to keep all toes and fingers out of the pinch point created between the gate and the truck.
- When renting, consider a lift-gate with cart-stops. These devices pop up from the lift-gate surface and prevent cargo from rolling off.
- If you rent or are using a truck without cart-stops, then remember to equip the truck with several chocks. Chocks should always be used to keep items from rolling or moving while you are moving them in and out of the truck.
- The lift-gate and truck body floor should form a uniformly flat surface so freight will roll easily in and out of the truck.
- Know the weight of your freight and lift-gate capacity. Do not overload.

Pre-Operations

- Check records to ensure that the lift-gate has been maintained according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Read the lift-gate operator's manual and follow the directions. Pay special attention to the safety warning decals. Make sure the decals are in place and legible.
- Visually inspect the lift-gate daily as part of the vehicle's trip inspection and report any deficiencies. Maintain lift-gate per manufacturer's instructions. Do not use the lift-gate if there are signs of abuse, or it fails to operate properly.
- Before running the lift-gate loaded, run it empty through its full range as a "pre-trip" to verify that it will provide a good landing area for the freight that will be rolled off it.

Operations

- Before freight is loaded, put the right wheels or devices under or on it for safe handling. Use the cart's wheels and handles to better control the item. Use a Johnson bar (hand lever) to put a pallet jack, tripod dollies, or platform dollies under the item.
- Position the load and use chocks underneath the wheels to keep it from rolling.
- Secure top-heavy loads with strapping preventing the item from tipping or rolling off the end.
- Consider a ratchet strap into your E-track at the rear and on both sides of the truck. Run it outside the truck to the end of the lift-gate and use it like a seat belt around the item to keep it upright and on the gate.
- Consider a hand winch secured to a load bar inside the truck and run a strap around the item. Push the item out of the truck onto the gate, while controlling the exit by winching out slack.
- Personnel should not ever attempt to put a piece of freight in motion that is beyond their ability to control once it starts moving. Get extra help if you need it.
- If crews are in a hurry to get a lift-gate load off the truck, take that as a sign of a problem. Rushed, workers can become distracted. Workers should be focused on the lift-gate zone, without distraction.
- Workers should be trained to keep an escape plan in mind. Be prepared to run or jump out of the way to keep from getting hurt.
- Set the vehicle brakes and wherever possible, operate the lift-gate on a level surface.
- One employee should coordinate all employees working to load, lower or elevate a load. Work out communication and routines between co-workers, including a "ready" signal without which the gate is not started.
- If you have by-standers, insist that they must keep their distance.

Special Safety Considerations

- Never use the lift-gate for any purpose other than to lift or lower cargo from the truck (i.e., never use as a personnel lift).
- Keep hands and feet clear of all pinch points.
- There is always a wide shear or pinch point exposure between the lift-gate and truck body during lift-gate operations.
- Take particular note of where the lift-gate and the truck bed meet. Feet and hands are particularly vulnerable, during raising and lowering of the lift-gate.
- If you are unloading curbside on a busy street use safety cones to block the lane and create safe space in which to work. Wear reflective safety vests. Use truck flashers and safety lights to mark off the edges of the lift-gate.
- Make sure the platform is not slippery (e.g., oil, rain, ice or snow). Make sure that slippery lift-gate decks are made slip resistant using mats, chocks, ratchet straps.

- If raining, cover the freight, with a waterproof tarp wrapping it around the freight like you would a furniture pad or shrink wrap. Secure the covering with large rubber bands used by household goods movers. Knowing the shipment is dry allows personnel to take time for cautious use of the gate.
- Do not climb or jump on or off an elevated lift-gate. Always use a ladder or stairs to access an elevated lift-gate or bring the lift-gate completely to the ground before entering or exiting.