

## ALI's Lift Inspector Certification Program aims at repair shop safety

by Rob Merwin

Cortland, N.Y.—Since 1947, the Automotive Lift Institute (ALI), a North American trade association for automotive lift manufacturers, located in Cortland, N.Y., has been promoting the safe design, construction, installation, and use of automotive lifts. Now, ALI is on the verge of launching the Lift Inspector Certification Program, expected to begin later this year.

"Those performing periodic lift safety inspections will be exposed to proper (inspection) methods and learn how to thoroughly inspect an installed automotive lift," said Robert O'Gorman, who has been president of ALI for the past seven years and has 24 years of product safety experience.

While the program, an ALI initiative, has been in development for several years, it had not been a high priority until recently, when the collective voice of the automotive industry began to clamor for such a program.

"Today, the increased introduction of nonconforming foreign products into the North American market, the current practice of installing older — sometimes ancient — lifts previously removed from service, and the increased activity of regulatory agencies has driven demand," O'Gorman said. "ALI has been able to respond quickly in their actions to organize during the last 18 months due to earlier work developing the program."

He said he hopes to see the program's first class of inspectors certified and graduated by year end, adding that shops committed to an effective employee safety program could see immediate benefits through morale and improved shop safety on a daily basis.

Through his experience with retail and commercial service bay operations, O'Gorman has learned that when an employer strives for the safety and well-being of employees, staff confidence and optimism tend to increase.

*ALI President Bob O'Gorman says the Lift Inspector Certification Program will be available this year.*

"For those operations willing to sacrifice safety, either because they do not understand the return on such an investment or because they choose to look at the bottom line or other competing factors, the value of such a safety initiative may not be realized until someone such as a corporate health and safety officer, a concerned owner/operator, or those in authority begin to get involved," O'Gorman said. "Regardless of what drives your lift safety training, inspection, and planned maintenance programs, a proactive approach to lift safety comes with much less

emotion for all involved than a reactive one at the expense of employees, family, or others in the service bay at the time of a catastrophic lift-related event."

When asked about the integrity of inspectors and the quality of their inspections, O'Gorman noted that feedback from the field and those within industry depicts a growing service sector.

"We hear stories that are good and others that are bad — the consensus leads me to believe there is room for improvement," he said.

Sanctions, however, have been levied on some who have made false Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cooperation claims, he said, and ALI is aware of inspectors who have falsely associated themselves with ALI in order to gain credibility.

"We think that for the most part, there are folks that would really like to do a good job," O'Gorman said, "but they simply do not yet have the depth of knowledge required to get the job done as thoroughly as needed."

Once its development concludes and the program begins, ALI officials expect the process to require participants to be prequalified, perform classroom work, be evaluated through testing, and gain practical experience in the field before certification.

"It is hoped that everyone will see the benefit of being certified by a legitimate

organization and want to take advantage of the reputation for safety that ALI has earned over the years," O'Gorman said. "There are those who look on the regulatory community with contempt, but the responsible — and likely more proactive — shop owners will embrace this new service."

Manufacturers are beginning to recognize the potential benefits of the Lift Inspector Certification Program, he said, because they would like their customers to use and care for their products responsibly. Lift inspection by a qualified person can be viewed as an extension of the lift manufacturer's overall quality mission that supports the lift operator and the owner, preventing accidents and reducing liability for everyone, he said. This can be achieved through proper installation, operation, maintenance, and service. For the same reasons, responsible inspection and service companies should willingly adopt the program, O'Gorman said.

He advised that until the program is fully developed and ALI has a database of certified automotive lift inspectors, shop owners interested in having their lifts inspected should contact the lift manufacturer.

Information concerning the Lift Inspector Certification Program development, its availability, and inspection scheduling, will be announced on ALI's website, [www.autolift.org](http://www.autolift.org), in coming months. ■

