



Inspection Bulletin

North American Standard Inspection Program

2015-02 – Safety Procedure for Lift Axle Inspection

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Summary

This Inspection Bulletin provides safety information for inspectors when working around and under vehicles equipped with lift axles that may lower and reduce clearance between the axle and the ground. This information is critical to ensure officer safety while under a vehicle during Level I or Level V Inspections.

This inspection safety procedure applies whether the lift axle is required or not while the vehicle is travelling on the roadway.

Background

The lift axle, commonly referred to as a pusher or tag axle, is used to raise one or more axles in order to engage a vehicle in turns, reduce rolling drag and component wear on empty or partly loaded vehicles, or to lift a self-steer axle when the vehicle is operated in reverse.

These axles can be automatically or manually activated, depending on the system. Many lift axles, when lowered, do not provide adequate space under the axle for an inspector.

There are four different ways to activate (lower) these lift axles:

1. Manually activated by the driver (either a switch or an air valve).
2. Driver turning the key to the “ON” position (automated and governed by weight or vehicle reverse movement).
3. Fully automated (requires constant electricity and is governed by weight).
4. Driver releasing the parking brakes.

In most cases where the axles are lowered automatically, the driver can deactivate the axle.

Safety Steps When Inspecting Lift Axles

1. During the walk-around inspection of the vehicle, identify if the vehicle is equipped with a lift axle.
2. If a lift axle is detected, determine how it is activated by speaking with the driver. If the axle has low clearance, have the driver lower the axle either manually or automatically (when possible). Complete the inspection of the vehicle, leaving any components under the vehicle that are not accessible due to the lowered axle for Step 4.

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3. If there is no way of lowering the air lift axle (certain automatic systems), mark the area where it lowers with a noticeable object (e.g., cones on the side, portable scale, etc.) and avoid that section while conducting the under-vehicle part of the inspection.
4. If the lowered lift axle from Step 2 prevents the inspection of surrounding components, instruct the driver to deactivate (raise) the lift axle and ensure he/she will not lower the axle again until the inspection is completed. Inspect components that were not accessible while the lift axle was lowered.