

Lift Gate Operation Safety Talk

Lift-gate operation is part of the job in delivery work, but it can become dangerous fast when loads shift, ground conditions are unstable, or equipment is used without a proper check. Falls, crush points, falling freight, and unexpected vehicle movement are all serious hazards. These risks can be reduced with safe operating practices, a careful check of the area before use, and steady control of both the load and the platform throughout the task.

Main Hazards

- Falling from the platform or vehicle body
- Loads falling from the platform
- Hands, feet, or body parts caught between moving parts and vehicle structure
- Platform or mechanism failure
- Soft, sloped, uneven, or debris-covered ground
- Vehicle movement during loading or unloading
- Overloaded or poorly distributed freight
- Wet, icy, oily, or contaminated platform surfaces
- Pedestrians or other vehicles entering the operating area
- Poor lighting during early morning, night, or bad-weather deliveries

Verification Before Work Begins

Lift-gate operations should be planned, and the operating area should be checked before the platform is unfolded. Tail lifts should be suitable for the task, correctly marked for load capacity, and operated only by trained, competent personnel.

- Firm, level, debris-free ground confirmed
- Enough space available to lower the platform safely
- Parking brake applied
- Stabilizers or other vehicle-stability measures used where fitted or required
- Traffic and pedestrian separation established
- Platform, hinges, controls, chains, rails, decals, markings, and reflective material checked
- Safe working load and load chart checked
- Load weight, height, and balance confirmed
- Wheels, cages, trolleys, or pallet equipment checked for condition and control
- Slip risk from rain, snow, mud, oil, or packaging debris checked
- Operator competence confirmed for the specific lift-gate type

Best Practice Controls

Loading and unloading areas should be away from passing traffic and uninvolved pedestrians where possible.

- Platform used for goods handling, not passenger lifting or casual riding
- Bystanders kept clear of the operating zone
- Hands, feet, and loose clothing kept away from crush and pinch points
- Load placed centrally and kept stable throughout travel
- Rated capacity never exceeded
- Fall-prevention features used where fitted or required, including gates, guard rails, roll stops, chains, or restraints
- Slip-resistant footwear used
- Platform surface kept clean and dry as far as possible
- Movement stopped immediately if load shifts, wheel binds, or platform motion appears abnormal
- Vehicle left stationary and secure for the full unloading cycle
- Platform returned to stored position and secured after use

Stop Work / Escalate When

- Hydraulic leak, abnormal noise, jerky movement, or uneven lifting
- Damaged rails, gates, chains, controls, or platform edges
- Ground too soft, too steep, or too congested
- Load too heavy, too tall, or too unstable
- Lighting too poor for safe positioning

Summary

Lift-gate safety depends on trained operation, firm ground, secure parking, correct load sizing, stable load placement, and full control of the operating area. Familiarity with lift-gate work must never replace inspection, planning, and fall-prevention controls.

Discussion points:

1. *Which delivery locations create the highest lift-gate risk because of slope, lighting, or traffic?*
2. *Which local failure points appear most often: overloading, unstable cages, poor parking position, or bystander exposure?*