



CompWest Loss Lessons: Box Truck Liftgate

Liftgates are very beneficial in preventing injuries. By providing an ease of maneuvering a load from the truck to the ground, common risks such as sprains and strains can be avoided. However, when not used properly, liftgates can lead to severed fingers and toes, crushed feet and other injuries. Drivers must be aware of the hazards and controls associated with their truck's liftgate.

True Story

A driver arrived at a customer site with a heavy load. The delivery was made using a standard box truck equipped with a hydraulic liftgate. While lowering the liftgate, it tilted unevenly causing the load to shift. As the driver attempted to correct the issue, he fell from the liftgate and suffered serious injuries.

Lessons Learned

Several factors may have contributed to the accident:

- An employer should have a preventative maintenance program for liftgates
- Liftgates should be routinely inspected by mechanics and drivers
- A faulty liftgate should be immediately reported
- Liftgates should be tested prior to the day's deliveries
- Formal training on the safe operation of the liftgate should be provided

Prevention Tips

- Establish a formal preventative maintenance program for liftgates
- Have a certified maintenance mechanic inspect the liftgates
- Ensure that mechanics perform scheduled maintenance and parts replacement according to the manufacturer's requirements
- Review safe operating instructions and training for drivers on safe operations in the manufacturer's operations manual
- Drivers should:
 - Pre-inspect liftgates prior to starting their deliveries for the day
 - Check for and report liftgate damage, fluid leaks, unsafe alteration or poor maintenance
 - Never operate a faulty liftgate until problems are properly corrected
 - Have situational awareness and proceed slowly when operating the liftgate with a heavy load
- Remind drivers to report any liftgate problems immediately to a supervisor or mechanic

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. For further information, please contact your CompWest loss control consultant.

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