

Vol.3, No.5 May 2006

Fixed



ops

Magazine

Building Business

What You Need To Know About Fixed Ops
Facility Design, Construction And Furnishings



Built For Speed

How To Design A Service Department
For Maximum Productivity

More Than Service

Why You Should Create An Automotive Retail
Environment In Your Service Department

Safety In Numbers

How Safety Compliance Impacts Your
Department's Bottom Line

BUILT FOR SPEED

How To Design A Service Department For Maximum Productivity

By Cory Powell

Cory Powell is technical information supervisor for Rotary Lift, a vehicle lift manufacturer that offers dealers free facility planning assistance. To learn more, call 800-640-5438, visit www.rotarylif.com or e-mail userlink@rotarylif.com.

Higher technician productivity means higher profits for dealerships. Recognizing this fact has led to changes in service department design over the years. Perhaps most noticeably, modern service departments and their individual service bays are larger than in the past. In older facilities, it's not uncommon to see bays that are only 10 feet wide. Today, many vehicle manufacturers are recommending that dealers make their service bays 14 feet wide.

The amount of work space available around a vehicle lift and in front of the vehicle within the bay are two of the most critical factors to consider when designing a service department for maximum productivity. To work as efficiently as possible, technicians need plenty of room to drive a vehicle onto the lift, work all around the vehicle, and access their tools and equipment without worrying about running into other vehicles or technicians.

When designing a new or remodeled service department, consider the following information:

- What types of vehicles do you currently service and will you service in the future?
- What types of lifts are you interested in? (Inground vs. surface, two-post vs. four-post, etc.)
- How much space do your technicians need to work most productively?
- What are the limitations of the building site?
- Is the property leased or owned?
- How many bays do you need?
- What is your project budget?

Dealer requirements vary greatly based

on their answers to these questions. For example, an import dealer in New York City is going to have very different needs than a Ford dealer in rural Texas. The New York dealer will likely be confined on space and will service mainly cars. The Texas dealer may have more room to expand and will have to consider the service requirements of a wider range of vehicles, from a Ford Focus up to an F-250 SD pick-up truck. You will need to consider the turning radius of the types of vehicles to be serviced in order to calculate an adequate width for the driving lane to enable technicians to easily position the vehicles onto the lifts. The length of the vehicles will also affect how long a bay needs to be. In new construction, the whole service facility may need to be wider to accommodate the length of the bays. In a remodel or a new facility with limited space, longer bays may reduce the width of the center driving lane.

The types of lifts you select will also impact the size of the bays. For example, it's possible to place an inground lift in an 11-foot-wide bay, whereas a two-post surface lift should not be installed in a bay narrower than 12 feet wide. As a result, you can fit more inground lifts in the same amount of space as surface lifts (12 inground lifts in the space of 11 two-post surface lifts). Four-post lifts, especially those equipped with advanced alignment equipment, require a great deal more space. Facility planners often design a special area of the shop for four-post lifts, which may include a separate door to make driving on and off the lifts easier.

Lift selection is often impacted by vehicle manufacturers' requirements. Some manufacturers require a specific lift, adapters or arm configuration for a particular vehicle. Others advise how many lifts of various sizes are required

for their range of vehicles. All of these factors must be considered when selecting the best lift assortment for a facility.

SPACE AND ACCESS

Opinions vary about how much space technicians need to work most productively. Many dealerships choose two-post surface lifts in 12-foot-wide bays. If the lifts are installed next to each other, this layout only gives technicians seven inches clearance between post base plates -not enough space to walk from the front to the back of a vehicle, unless it's in the air. Standard building design calls for three feet of clearance for walkways. To accommodate a three-foot path, two-post lift bays need to be 14 feet wide. Inground lifts provide three feet of clearance in 11-foot bays when the lifts are raised, and no obstructions when they're lowered. When lifts are too close together, technicians run the risk of banging vehicle doors into each other, being delayed when trying to move from the front of a vehicle to the back, and not having enough room to maneuver their tools and equipment to work efficiently.

To improve access around the vehicle, lifts can be staggered between bays. However, this can cut into the width of the center drive lane. If the center lane is not wide enough, it may be necessary to execute three-point turns in order to turn into a bay and onto a lift properly. This clearly takes more time than making a simple turn into the bay, and results in a reduction in productivity.

Another important consideration is how much space the technicians have to work in front of the vehicle, both when it's on the ground and when it's raised. Since a majority of repair and maintenance work takes place from the steering wheel forward, technicians spend a lot of time in this area. They should have enough room to convey



last of
floor for
3rd floor

BUILDING
CONSTRUCTION
U.S.

niently access their workbench, move equipment and work on the vehicle. Depending on the size of vehicles serviced and the amount of building space available, dealerships give their technicians from three to seven feet of workspace in front of vehicles within each bay.

FLEXIBILITY AND DESIGN

Dealers building new facilities usually have more flexibility with their designs than those who are remodeling an existing building. Likewise, dealerships that own their property are usually free to make more changes than those who lease. Dealers who lease will often have to choose surface lifts. It is important to include the service department early in the planning process for a new or remodeled building. Know how many bays you want, and then work with the architect or facility planner to determine how many will fit in the space allowed for maximum productivity. If there is not enough room for the number of bays you need, often the designer can find a little extra space to pull from other rooms or can move a door, etc., to fit an additional lift.

When designing a new or remodeled service facility, it is possible - no matter what your budget - to maximize technician productivity by working with an experienced facility planner. Look for one who specializes in vehicle dealerships, including the service department, and who works with the OE manufacturers regularly. He or she should be familiar with the manufacturers' plans for future vehicles, so these vehicles will be considered when planning the size of your bays and the lifts installed

"There's More To Buying A Lift Than Just Steel!"



Are You Getting Value From Your Decision?

Selecting the right lift is only part of what you need to consider. Ask yourself these questions:

- Product quality – Is the lift third party tested by ETL and certified by the Automotive Lift Institute (ALI)?
- Reliability and performance – Does the manufacturer have a solid history in the lift business? Are you confident that the lift will perform long term?
- Support – Are parts readily available? Can you get local service?

Can you answer YES to these questions? If not, you may be putting your business revenue and your technicians at risk from unexpected downtime! You need to have confidence and trust that you're making the right decision.

The World's Most Trusted Lift

Rotary Lift® sells more professional lifts than anyone else in the world, and has for over 80 years. They're built for years of dependable service, and they deliver on it consistently. Rotary Lift has the largest network of factory-trained installation and service professionals. They have access to parts engineered for Rotary lifts, meaning no short-cuts in quality and consistency.

A lift out of service takes revenue and possibly customers away from your business. Your purchase is more than just steel; it's a relationship. Get the most value from your decision, choose a lift company you can trust.

For more information call us at **800.640.5438** or visit us on the web at **www.rotarylif.com**.

ROTARY LIFT®
The World's Most Trusted Lift™

