

COMPLIANCE ALERT

Wheelchair Lifters & Tailgate Loaders

Wheelchair lifters and tailgate loaders fitted to vehicles must be maintained in a safe and serviceable condition, with inspection, maintenance, and service records kept up to date. Failure to do so exposes operators and organisations to safety, legal, and insurance risks, particularly where equipment is used to lift people or operate under load.

Classification

A wheelchair lifter is equipment designed to lift a person, so it is classified and governed under AS/NZS 3856 (Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities — vehicle mounted). A tailgate loader is the primary lifting appliance on the vehicle — it lifts the load directly, so it falls within AS 1418.8 (design/construction) and AS 2550.1 (safe use).

Not applicable: AS 1418.17 / AS 2550.17 are not the correct citations for tailgate loaders and should not be used. AS 4991 (Lifting Devices) applies only to devices that attach to a primary lifting appliance (e.g. a sling or lifting beam), not to the tailgate loader itself, and should not be cited either.

Applicable Standards

Wheelchair Lifters	Tailgate Loaders
AS/NZS 3856.1:2021 – Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities — Vehicle mounted, Part 1	AS 1418.8 – Tailgate loaders (special purpose appliances) — design/construction
AS/NZS 3856.2 – Hoists and ramps for people with disabilities — Vehicle mounted, Part 2	AS 2550.1 – Tailgate loaders — safe use (90-day, annual, and major 10-yr inspection)
AS 1418.1 – General requirements	AS 1418.1 – Whole AS 1418 series — general requirements

OEM requirements take precedence over all standards where applicable. AS 1418.1 and AS 2550.1 provide general safety principles only and do not replace OEM requirements or AS/NZS 3856 for wheelchair lifters.

Inspection Requirements

Wheelchair Lifters	Tailgate Loaders
Pre-use checks by operator or attendant	90-day — competent person
Periodic inspection by a competent person	Annual — AS 1418.8 / AS 2550.1
Servicing in accordance with manufacturer instructions	Major (10-year) — required, AS 2550.1
Emergency lowering and safety systems operational	Equipment available for servicing
Inspection and service records maintained	Inspection and service records maintained

Common Compliance Failures

Wheelchair Lifters	Tailgate Loaders
Emergency lowering inoperative or inaccessible	Emergency lowering inoperative or obstructed
Safety interlocks faulty or bypassed	Missing or damaged controls, guards, roll stops
Worn or unsafe platforms, barriers, or restraints	Unsafe platforms or worn grip surfaces
Hydraulic or electrical faults	Hydraulic or electrical faults
Missing or out-of-date inspection labels	Missing or out-of-date inspection labels

Why This Matters

If equipment fails under load and emergency or safety systems cannot be operated, there may be no safe method of recovery. Allowing wheelchair lifters or tailgate loaders to remain in service with known defects, or misclassifying equipment to avoid required inspections, may expose individuals and organisations to regulatory action, prohibition notices, civil liability, or insurance refusal.

Action Required

- Confirm inspection currency and apply current compliance labels; maintain records on the vehicle or readily accessible
- Address identified defects immediately — do not operate equipment that has failed inspection or is unsafe
- Classify tailgate loaders under AS 1418.8 / AS 2550.1 (not AS 1418.17 / AS 2550.17, and not AS 4991)
- Classify wheelchair lifters under AS/NZS 3856.1 and AS/NZS 3856.2