

Serving independent supermarkets, country stores and convenience retailers across several states, Associated Grocers of New England (AG) is the largest retail-owned wholesale distributor in the region. Over the past 70-years, AG has significantly grown and expanded its offerings, providing their



customers with products, programs, services and technologies to help them better serve their communities. Their 480,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art facility in Pembroke, NH incorporates the latest technologies in receiving, handling and shipping goods. This allows them to maintain high service levels and a consistent 99 percent on-time store delivery record.

Associated Grocers Challenges

- Continual truck maintenance
- Strain and stress on technicians

Abel Womack Solution

- TechMate service lift
- Raymond forklifts

Benefits

- Improved ergonomics
- Reduced maintenance time

In order to fulfill the diverse needs of more than 600 customers and maintain their exceptional level of service, AG heavily relies on their highly efficient fleet of electric forklifts to get the job done.

Challenges

AG utilizes electric pallet jacks, reach trucks and order pickers around the clock, and performs regular maintenance on their fleet. The maintenance staff spent a lot of time bent over or lying on the ground, using chains and floor jacks to lift the trucks from the ground to allow them access to the undercarriage and wheels. They were constantly faced with this labor-intensive, “back breaking” method of servicing their lift trucks and sought out Abel Womack for a more ergonomic, efficient and secure solution.

Solutions



An increasingly popular solution among maintenance crews is the TechMate. Abel Womack has been working closely with AG for years and dropped by to give a full demonstration of the battery-operated service lift. They provided training for AG’s primary users so they’d be fully comfortable loading and securing varying trucks using the hydraulic lift with a locking mechanism.

Dan, an AG service technician, stated that, “positioning trucks correctly on the lift and ‘trusting it’ really was the only learning curve.” Service technicians now raise and lower units confidently and much quicker and easier than with previous methods. The lift typically remains stationary, but can be moved easily.

Results

Before installing TechMate, Dan said, “fixing an A-frame was a 2-2.5-hour job, and required removing the undercarriage, springs and pins with only four inches of clearance. The TechMate has simplified the process considerably, specifically by allowing better access. Now, it only takes about 1.5 hours.”

Changing drive tires requires the truck be lifted higher to access the framing. By using the TechMate, the time it takes to do this has been reduced from 15 to five minutes. It’s also a more effective method than previous ways of doing things because it’s ergonomic. Dan jokes that ergonomics are the biggest benefit because the lift saves backs. Dropping the gear box, which typically takes 1.5-2 hours to remove, now takes about an hour. The same can be said for load wheels—this time is nearly cut in half. Overall, “the TechMate has been outstanding and makes it so much easier to service the trucks,” says Dan. We’re happy to report that AG has solved their dilemma by installing a mobile service lift a year ago and has no plans to return to their old ways.