

Florida Harley Dealer Liberated by Upward Mobility



- 21 Series 2-Post Hydraulic Lift
- Straddle Carriage
- Lifts Loads up to 2,000 lbs.
- 14' Vertical Rise
- 2 Levels of Vertical Rise
- 30 FPM Travel speed

Upward mobility is a completely different thing. But to one Harley dealer it proved to be just as liberating.

Chester's Fort Lauderdale Harley-Davidson® is one of the biggest Harley dealerships in the United States, serving the south Florida market from its 64,000 sq. ft. facility in Sunrise, FL. In addition to selling new and used bikes, Chester's FtL rents bikes, sells a complete line of Harley apparel and merchandise, and has a large service, repair and parts department.

The total store square footage ranks among the largest 5 percent of Harley dealers nationwide. Due to an equally strong revenue position, the majority of space is allocated to the primary sales and support areas – the showroom, service department and administrative offices. This leaves limited space for storage.

A modest mezzanine on one end of a large bay in the back of the facility is the primary space dedicated for storing the excess inventory of new, used and rental pool motorcycles. With a truckload of approximately 15 new bikes arriving every week, and steady activity in the used and rental categories, there is constant traffic in and out of the mezzanine.

Until 2014 bikes were lifted to and lowered from the mezzanine with a forklift. It was an involved process, requiring a bike to be strapped to a pallet, with one man operating the forklift and another two needed to position the pallet securely on the forks.

Only several members of the Chester's FtL staff were trained for the labor intensive and time consuming process, and, as each had other primary duties, bikes often accumulated in the bay area.

Chester's FtL General Manager John Dempsey recollected, "The buildup of product in the bay was a nuisance, but the bigger issue was the safety of our people involved in the lifting process. Using a forklift was a shaky process at best."

"I used to work at the Naples (FL) Harley store and we had some sort of lift that moved inventory to and from the elevated storage. I couldn't remember the exact product or brand name, but I was pretty sure it was what we needed."

Dempsey eventually consulted with Florida Lifts, a Boynton Beach, FL provider of residential and commercial lift products, and learned that a vertical reciprocating conveyor (VRC) was what he was looking for.

Florida Lifts works with a wide variety of lift products, and had experience with VRCs. VRCs move materials, but not people, between multiple levels in factories, warehouses, institutions or anywhere that products or supplies need to move from one level to another. They have their own national code (ANSI/ASME B20.1) and are specifically exempt from the national elevator code.



After a site visit and a requirements analysis, Florida Lifts recommended a PFlow 21 Series hydraulic VRC to better access Chester's FtL 14' mezzanine. The investigative process began in the Spring and the lift was installed by Florida Lifts later that Fall.

PFlow custom builds all VRCs to the specifications of each customer. The Chester's 21 Series has a 2,000 load capacity, and a 6' 0" W x 10' 0" L x 7' 0" H lift carriage, more than enough to handle the largest Harley's, even if still in a crate.

The carriage is lifted and lowered by two hydraulic cylinders, mounted on the guide columns that straddle the carriage. The hydraulic technology provides cost-effective durability, allowing the lifts to operate continuously throughout the day, with installation costs and maintenance needs less than other lifting technologies. The VRC can be loaded and unloaded on both sides of ground floor, with upper access through an entrance door to the mezzanine. A trip up or down takes less than 30 seconds.

DEALERSHIP

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“PFlow makes great equipment; I have been doing this for 30 years, installing material lifts, elevators and dumbwaiters, and in my opinion PFlow is the top quality of equipment out there,” said Kevin Mannes, a Florida Lift managing partner. “I have worked with other manufacturers over the years and nothing compares to this equipment. If installed properly it is bullet proof.”

The new hydraulic VRC has solved Chester’s FtL manpower issues and concerns with safety. After some initial training, most members of the staff can access a bike from the mezzanine single-handedly.

“The new VRC has improved the staff morale on several levels,” said Dempsey. “First everybody knows it’s much safer than the forklift, and they appreciate the upgrade. And before there were only two or three people who could move bikes up and down via the fork lift.”

“Now if a salesman or somebody from the rental department needs a bike, he doesn’t have to go back to service. He can roll the bike right on the lift himself, close the door, hit the button and let it go down. By the time he walks down the stairs the bike is there. No big deal.”

FURTHER EXPANSION

The installation of the 21 Series VRC was designed to be the first phase of a two phase storage expansion plan. Chester’s FtL built a second mezzanine over the majority of the open bay area. The new mezzanine is flush to the wall of the existing mezzanine, fully encircling the VRC. The VRC has dual access gates on the upper level, as it does on the lower, to serve both the existing and new mezzanines.

“The lift is a tremendous win for this dealership,” said Dempsey. “No more excess manpower issues, no more bikes scratched. I love the product, I really do. One of the best things we have done at the store.”

Added Mannes, “We have had no service calls on the Chester Lift since we installed it. Very untypical of elevators. Typically you install it, and you’re back there four or five times to adjust things to get it just right. Not with PFlow.”