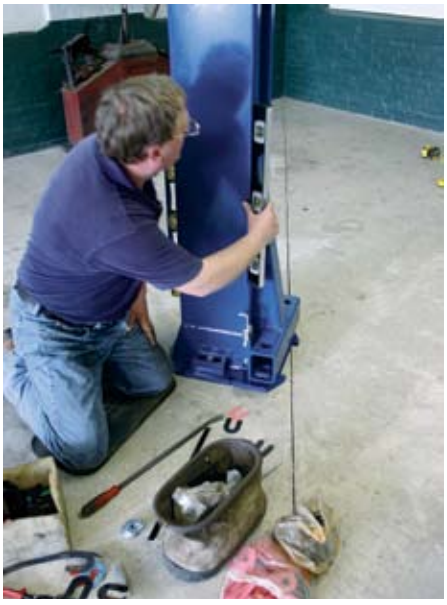
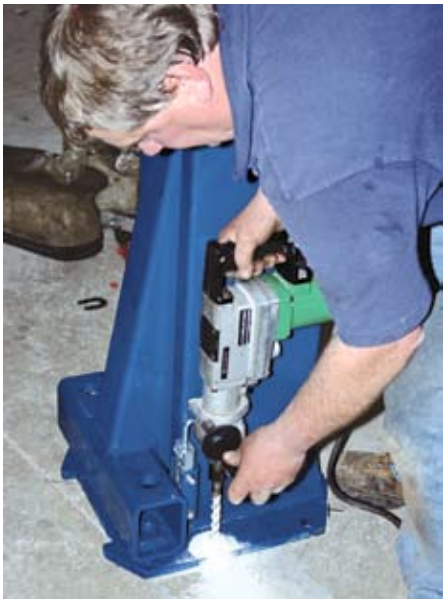
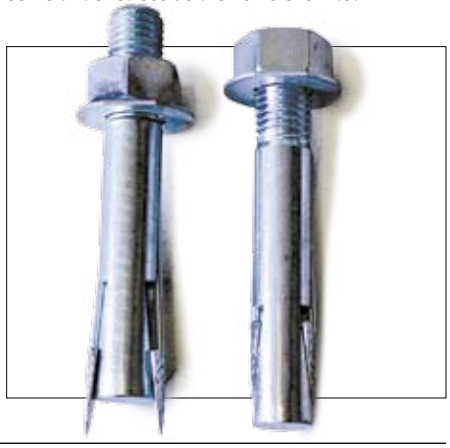
The sales rep at Automotive Service Equipment informed us that an increasing number of their customers are installing lifts by themselves, and the instructions are such that this could feasibly be done, but after weighing the options, we elected to bring in a professional. Our expert, Dennis Roberts of Northeast Lift Installers, Inc., charged a very reasonable rate and had our lift up and running in one day. He also provided valuable insight and peace of mind. It was well worth it. Here Dennis and crew raise the columns prior to positioning.



Prior to drilling any mounting holes, Dennis gets both columns in precisely the correct position. This includes dialing in the vertical attitude of each column using shims. Our Bend-Pak lift came with a shim pack, but Dennis had a variety of his own. Since each column mounts independently, the pair must be parallel so that the lift arms don't come under stress as the vehicle is lifted.



Once the columns are right where they need to be, Dennis uses a masonry drill to make the holes in the floor. The dimensions of the holes are another specification that should be verified per the lift manufacturer's instructions, as the anchors are designed for a specific diameter hole. The better the concrete, the longer it takes to drill each hole.



Our lift came with seismic –type anchors, which Dennis feels are among the best. The anchor is inserted into a hole, and then the nut is tightened, forcing the arrow-headed wedges against the sides of the hole, providing positive mounting. These need to be tightened with a torque wrench to determine when they are secure. If your lift didn't include anchors, don't cheap out—get seismic-quality bolts even if you'll never experience an earthquake.

With the lift columns secured to the floor, all that remains is to assemble the unit. Most of the remaining steps are simpler to perform than the actual placing and mounting of the columns, though you'll still need power. Nearly all lifts require a 220-volt source—do not attempt to run yours on 110. We had an electrician handle our wiring, and added a lockable service box next to the lift to shut off the power feed in case of emergency or to prevent untrained users from messing with the unit.

of the floor they mount to, with some designs even claiming to be portable. But while the four-post design makes fluid changes and transmission and exhaust work convenient, for chassis work, a two-post unit may be better, as it allows the wheels to hang.

Though many four-post lifts can now be optioned with a jacking tray, which slides between the ramps and allows bottle jacks to be used to raise the wheels off the lift, we knew we'd be using ours primarily for working on cars, and we wanted something of a commercial grade since it would see frequent use by multiple operators. We contacted Automotive Service Equipment to discuss its line of Bend-Pak two-post lifts, and found we could get an asymmetrical-type unit with 10,000lb capacity to fit our narrow bay. In fact, after consulting with ASE, we learned that the narrow unit would not be necessary, and were advised to go with the standard asymmetric two-post.

Our conversations with ASE also covered shop requirements, including floor thickness, ceiling height, electrical power service, and so on. Though we'd been told that installing the unit on our own was possible with the included instructions, we opted to hire a pro, and found it to be worth every dime, between the access to expertise and the installation time savings. Check out photo captions for some insight before realizing the dream for yourself.

SOURCES:

Automotive Service Equipment; 800-229-6218; www.asedeals.com

Northeast Lift Installers; 518-883-8137; www.northeastliftinstallers.com