

Readers *Letters*

Dear Mark,

With regard to your notes on H&S. We have a driver on the transport side who operates a rig equipped with a plant body, hydraulic ramps and a 22 t/m lorry loading crane. Earlier this year he was loading a roller (weighing about two tonnes) up the ramps on a wet winters afternoon, without even connecting the winch line let alone doing the correct and obvious thing which was to lift the blessed thing on with the crane. And surprise, surprise the roller lost traction, slid and chucked the driver out resulting in squashed ribs, ambulances etc etc.

After the incident we issued a memo to all drivers stating that from now on all rollers and similar kit should be craned aboard. When the driver helpfully went to a firm of ambulance chasing personal injury types they succeeded in drawing thousands from our insurers on the basis that because we had issued the memo we had allowed unsafe working practices. So we get a black mark and increased insurance costs because our man was late for his tea. This hardly promotes the instituting of better and safer working.

Anon Name not provided

Dear Leigh,

I thought an experience I had at work today might provide a useful warning to your readers, please feel free to publish it.

Before going to work @ 5:15am I watched the news on the most recent NY tower crane accident and it was immediately apparent to me that the Slew-ring assembly had failed. The first thing I did when I got to the top -450 ft -(136 m) of a 2003, 415 Peiner tower crane was check the slew-ring bolts with a 2lb beater using minimum force. There are two rows of bolts, each row having 59. With the crane balanced off, I started with the top row (slew bearing) and when I struck the third bolt it moved (loose), I continued checking and when I came to the 28th bolt it broke in two! I then went back to the bolt that had movement and decided to remove it for inspection, which revealed a severe crack at the same location as the one that sheared off.

Because of finding two bolts with a similar failure and the likelihood that there could be many more, I immediately put the crane out of operation. The manufacturer has been contacted and are trying to arrange for a "Factory Engineer" to come out and thoroughly examine ALL the bolts, and if needed oversee their replacement. Which is the only certain solution!

I will admit that if it was not for having seen the news bulletin, I would not have gone through the extra effort/procedure needed to properly inspect a slew-ring. The typical way it's done by operators and Inspectors is either just a "visual" while climbing through the slew-ring, or just a tap with a carpenters hammer, relying on your sense of sound to hear a difference between bolts. The problem with this is that without balancing off the crane to ensure that the load on the bearing is distributed equally, you can't get a true sense that the bolts are equally tightened and torque to the proper specifications. And that goes for Mast bolts too!

Considering the potential for loss of life and property damage, these common, time-saving methods are just not enough for what's at risk. Like the old saying goes, "don't put off till tomorrow, what you should do today"!

This is a good example of why tower cranes should be thoroughly examined, and more than just once or twice a year. Tower crane examinations require time and contractors are going to have to get used to it. Recently I was talking to a third party tower crane Inspector and he boasted that he can inspect a crane in three hours, easy money! In general a tower crane inspection should take at "least" six to eight hours (depending on configuration). And with all due respect to OSHA and others, "they are the Jack of all trades and master at none", and cannot be expected to have detailed knowledge of tower cranes. A tower crane specialist should have:

1. Appropriate recognized academic qualifications.
2. Relevant level of practical experience.
3. Model specific technical training directly from the Manufacturer.

Yours, Terry McGettigan
San Diego, CA.

terry@towercranesupport.com

Gentlemen,

Regarding the nearly constant barrage of accidents due to outriggers being improperly deployed, I would add these thoughts. In the small end of the market, especially, customers are always looking for the cheapest price they can find. They shouldn't be surprised at the level of service a cheap price buys. I find that lots of people have cranes to rent but only a portion have the knowledge and/or expertise to rent along with the machine.

Both are required for a job to go off safely and smoothly.

It is the same old story- "I want your service at the cheap guys price". Secondly, laziness or lack of discipline, or both, contribute to many of these incidents. Many people plan for what they want to happen, rather than what might happen - gravity never takes a holiday. Some seem to think that since they got away with something stupid once, they always will. Probably one of the reasons I never expanded to any extent was because I would rather leave a machine sit in the yard than send it out with personnel that were too lazy to do EVERYTHING necessary (including proper set up) to make the job safe. I never generated as many dollars that way, but had fewer problems for sure!

Regarding the legal system run amok here in the states, all I can say is "welcome to our world". I recently met with an attorney to ask some questions regarding the pending crane rules overhaul. I left with more unanswered questions than when I arrived. Why in the world would anyone want to leave all this behind?

Regards,

Chuck Mostert

Readers Letters



Hello Leigh,

Before starting with Baulderstone this year I was with Gillespie Cranes in Sydney for over 22 years a very good company for training people, most other crane owners simply complain about the lack of good people to employ but won't train anyone.

The thing I find amazing with the crane industry is the lack of training most owners do.

If it were their local football team and they were not training twice a week, these same people would call for the coach to be sacked yet most of them would not do training even twice a year!

This could be a good topic for discussion on your web site.

Regards, Reg Eggleton

Heavy Lift Supervisor,
Baulderstone Hornibrook,
Port Botany Expansion Project

Dear Sir,

I began my career in the lifting industry over 35 years ago, starting in the Lifting gear hire market before moving into sales where I have spent the majority of my time working with manufacturers of lifting gear ['below the hook'], cargo restraint systems and safety equipment.

Traditionally, this has been a close-knit industry; everyone has known everyone else and there has been a 'network of individuals' with a level of product knowledge and expertise which has enabled us to offer help and advice regarding a myriad of uses of this equipment and its applications over many years.

As time advances, this 'network of individuals' gets smaller and smaller and as I approach my own retirement this September, I wonder if there is sufficient recruitment throughout our industry to sustain this important depth of understanding and expertise. As the industry changes for the future and new Health and Safety legislation is updated, it means that an increasing number of applications will need a level of technical support which may be in increasingly short supply.

In an industry where safety is of paramount importance in every application, product quality, technical support, customer service and training are what make manufacturers and distributors fit for purpose. Whilst I know that the directors of our company, and those of our parent company, are taking the actions which are necessary to ensure the integrity of our own activities, I hope that all manufacturers and distributors will take a long hard look into ways in which years of expertise can be safeguarded and adapted for the benefit of the industry for the future.

In ending I would like to thank the industry, manufacturers and customers alike, for the good times in my career of which there were many.

Yours Sincerely

Joe Walters, Head of Sales at Trans-web

Dear Sir,

I note your piece on the internet covering working hours, while I am sure that it is well meant and has some fact to it, you are opening up a real can of worms with this. It is hard to see how the crane hire industry could cope without high levels of overtime. I am in the mobile crane hire business and from long and bitter experience know that if I put two drivers on one crane in shifts to cover the hours we need to work the cranes in order to make a decent return on today's rates. I would end up with a disaster on my hands. The crane would not get looked after properly and we would have fighting over the overtime hours and who works which shift. If working hours are restricted then hire rates must go up and yet as an industry we have continually failed to make this happen. I would rather work the cranes less than we currently do, and maybe spend more time maintaining and inspecting them? But current rates just do not allow that on most models.

Our men work too many hours I know it. But I also know that many of our competitors are much worse, especially those who undercut rates the most and send their cranes all over the country. I also know how they want the long hours in order to earn the big bucks. So I just cannot see it happening, not in my lifetime anyway.

If you do use this letter I would rather you did not use my name.

All the best,

Name provided by withheld on request.

Remember

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days**

Haydock Park

June 25th & 26th 2008

www.vertikaldays.net

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