

Theft and the hire industry

Theft has always been an issue within the construction equipment industry and although estimates of the size of the problem vary, figures from security registration firm Datatag, suggest that it is fast approaching £1.5 million per week in the UK and €4 billion a week throughout Europe. The figures not only take into account the cost of stolen machinery - but also other consequential losses associated with theft, such as loss of income and rehiring equipment. The theft of fuel is another major issue on the rise which, according to Datatag, costs UK companies close to £1 billion a year.

Stolen machinery has a recovery rate less than 10 percent, with many machines loaded on boats and shipped out of the country within hours of being stolen. It's a sorry figure but nine out of ten companies in the UK have experienced theft, with machines

not only taken from rental yards or construction sites, but also 'acquired' by a fraudulent rental - which is also on the rise.

Another factor that has been brought to light by a number of CPA member companies is that when machinery has been taken



The CPA is planning to draw up an updated strategy to combat the theft of construction equipment

from a site, unless there is clear evidence of intent to permanently deprive the owner, the police may not consider it a theft - but instead a civil matter. Moving forward, the CPA is investigating what role it can take to identify the scale of the problem amongst its members and how the losses are occurring. It is also asking its members what type

of equipment is most frequently stolen. With this information and working together with other associations and organisations, the CPA is planning to draw up an updated strategy to combat theft, which will be co-ordinated by CPA's legal manager David Smith (david.smith@cpa.uk.net).

Global policies - not always the best way

When the UK's 'Industrial Strategy for Construction' was published in 2013 it set ambitious targets for cost and time reductions in the construction process, whilst improving working conditions. Key factors that can be used to help achieve these targets, include developments in supply chain management and increased use of digital technology. These come together in approaches such as lean construction and modern methods of construction. Risk assessment and elimination of waste are also important principles supporting a lean approach.

Proper assessment of the actual risk allows control measures to be proportionate, and not over-specified, eliminating wasted time and cost. Many issues that the CPA deals with concern policies from clients, planning authorities and contractors, which set out to control risk, but which are burdensome and wasteful when unnecessarily applied. Health and safety, equipment theft, protection of vulnerable road users and public health issues are all areas where global policies have imposed unreasonable costs on members with no tangible benefit.

The CPA is working with other organisations such as HS2, Crossrail and industry bodies including UKCG and CECA to reduce the risk across the complete supply chain and win support for a risk-assessed and flexible approach to risk management. The recently published guidance on Ground Conditions is an example of this - it stresses cooperative working and open communication about actual needs, allowing the affected sectors to look at alternative, more efficient ways of achieving the desired outcomes.

Commonly accepted guidance can reduce waste while improving safety.



HS2 update...

CPA's director Kevin Minton has held a series of meetings with the high speed rail group HS2, to discuss enhanced safety, environmental and other standards that it may require machinery to meet. The discussions are based on the idea that HS2 should be clear about its objectives, but leave it to equipment owners to determine the most effective way of meeting them. The requirements placed on Tier 1 contractors allow for this. Further discussions will take place as HS2 gets closer to setting out its requirements. HS2 also suggested they may work with CPA to organise workshops with equipment owners and manufacturers to explore these issues.



The CPA is also working with HS2 on establishing a standardised set of descriptions for construction equipment. This is the first step towards actually quantifying the availability of machinery and the suitably skilled operators that HS2 and other major infrastructure projects will need.



HS2 may organise workshops with equipment owners and manufacturers to explore issues with standards, safety and the environment.