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On the cover:

A Unic 370C works in a very confined space, lifting turbine components on a nuclear de-commissioning project.



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Bigger than ever, our UK & Ireland dealer guide provides an extensive listing of lifting and access products, together with telephone numbers for the local dealers.

Pull it out and keep it for reference.

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Wear a full body harness with a short lanyard in boom type platforms

Aerial platforms



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c&a
comment



Fit for purpose?

In the UK the Health & Safety Executive and Health and Safety Commission are currently going through a consultation process on whether or not they should merge into a single,

more powerful Health and Safety body. For most ordinary people this hardly needs a consultation process. Few will understand why we should bear the cost of two health and safety bodies when one will do.

A far bigger problem is the HSE's adversarial approach to accident investigation which distracts from making the workplace a safer place. Don't get me wrong, most inspectors I meet care very much about improving safety. However too much of the effort is spent on trying to blame and punish rather than improve safety.

The net effect of this is that efforts to learn from the mistakes and errors that cause accidents are stifled by the pressure to build a legal case against those held responsible and the length of time that it takes.

Accident investigations in the UK are unproductively long. The HSE appears to sit on evidence for years before publishing a report or deciding on prosecution. In the meantime we do not benefit from the lessons that might be learnt.

It need not be so. A large tower crane collapsed in mid November 2006 in Bellevue, Washington wiping out a building and killing an innocent man in his home. The accident investigation was complicated by the fact that it involved an engineering company that had designed the crane's foundation, the contractor, a tower crane erection company, a separate crane rental company, the crane manufacturer and the crane operator. In spite of this and the highly litigious atmosphere in the USA, a full report was published within six months, new rules proposed and agreed, fines issued and appeals dealt with.

In comparison the report on a tower crane accident at Canary Wharf in May 2000 was still being investigated three and a half years later. It was five years before the full report was published. A more straightforward accident in Worthing in February 2005 is still open with the crane owner unaware if the HSE will prosecute or not.

The lengthy and confrontational manner in which workplace accidents are investigated and tried in this country is detrimental to the effort to reduce risks and improve safety. It is about time that the establishment understood that and adopted a faster more open approach to accident investigation.

Mark Darwin

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