

Dear Mark,

I would like to comment briefly on the letter from my old friend and former colleague Stuart Anderson, in your last issue on "Who built the first fully hydraulic rope crawler crane?" Stuart is, of course, correct, in what he writes - when it comes to technical knowledge on cranes past and present, he is like a walking dictionary. However, the limited development of cranes by Hymac never altered the basics of that company as a hydraulic excavator producer and sales of cranes were few, and to the best of my knowledge, confined almost exclusively to the UK market.

Sennebogen metamorphosed themselves completely from a small manufacturer of hydraulic excavators mainly sold under the Zeppelin badge, into an internationally known producer of specialist cranes of all sorts, a most incredible achievement.

As I heard from the father's own lips, this was purely due to the courage and foresight of his son Erich Jnr., thus matching his parent's enterprise and determination as the founder of the business. I am sure that it will continue with future generations of Sennebogen.

To end this letter on a flippant note, if one dropped the word "crawler" and interpreted the word "hydraulic" in its literal sense, it would be Coles in 1879 who produced the world's first hydraulic crane, using water not oil...

Yours Sincerely

Dick Lloyd

R.J. Lloyd

Dear Leigh,

I must ask for you to consider withdrawing the IPS parts advert on your web site on the grounds that it advocates smoking by showing a man with a pipe stuck in his mouth on the advert. On another subject of employers seeking workers can you print an apology for misleading us out of work people. If you can advertise for them then there are no jobs so put up the jobs or print an apology, sounds like sour grapes but you made the statement and therefore in name of balance and fair play print the jobs or retraction due to the bosses covering their failing businesses by saying they need workers - common practice.

More than cynical

We looked at the IPS advert, which is a deliberately retro advert promoting its parts service, we are entirely

happy that it does not promote smoking in any way and that the image is entirely in order. As to our correspondents' other point, we asked for further clarification but as of going to press have not had any further response. We think he is referring to the offer we have made to run jobs wanted adverts for free in order to help those currently unemployed. We do know for a fact that the few we have run have drawn some responses with at least two of them leading to more than one job offer. We can also confirm that as far as we are aware all of our job advertisers have gone on to hire the staff they were looking for. We have withheld this mans name as he has not responded with his approval or clarification and far be it for us to not print a complaint.

LWS

Dear Sir,

The Office of Fair Trading recently revealed the extent of the fines handed out to 103 contractors who it deemed had been guilty of bid rigging and cover pricing. Although the fines total £130 million, the OFT pointed out that they could have been far higher were it not for the current economic climate.

The question now is, what effect will the whole situation have upon the guilty parties? Many people will presume that the big players will find it easier to cope with the financial penalties but the fines are proportionate to turnover. For example, ARG Mansfield Ltd, a smallish player with a net worth of less than £100k has been fined £12k, whilst Kier Group has been hit with a fine of nearly £18 million. Normally the fines would have to be paid within two months but the OFT is allowing the contractors to pay off their penalties in instalments over a three year period. This should help to minimise the impact on each company's cash flow. :

I think the OFT will be pretty flexible with the instalments. Their purpose was to take a stand and clean up the construction industry, it was not to close down companies and put more people on the dole... The OFT has also directed procurers not to automatically blacklist the guilty parties from future tendering processes as it feels that cover pricing was so endemic in the industry that it was almost 'the norm' and that there were many more guilty parties than the ones that were actually penalised. The general consensus is that punishments have been meted out and lessons have been learnt so everyone should move on.

I am though sceptical about the 'forgive and forget guidance'. Whilst the OFT may have some sway with public sector procurers, the private sector may not choose to be so forgiving. Some private companies who feel that they have been ripped-off in the past may not invite these contractors to tender for future projects and contractors that rely on private sector work could see their future order books dwindling.

It is too early to say what effect this situation will have on the 103 contractors, however at we at Top Service are monitoring them all carefully, large and small companies alike.

Yours truly,

Emma Bridges

Director Top Service

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your article on Nifty Lift's SiOPS System, although the system appears robust, it seems to me that a machine travelling over rough terrain and the operator forcing the 'system' downwards (by hanging onto one of the handles provided) will make the machine stop inadvertently.

I base this on the company's video showing a 'light' downward force only is required to 'trip' the device. This then has the effect of making a safety system stop the machine for no apparent reason. If this happens often enough during the operation of the machine it becomes inconvenient. Then the operators will try to circumvent the device, therefore rendering it useless. One must remember that a 'simple' system (as you put it) is also easy to go around and modify.

Safety systems have morphed over the years. A simple little switch or two can be circumvented if a system alerts an operator of a danger when there isn't one. I have seen too many of these types of safety devices being 'modified' (on other types of agricultural and construction machines) because they became a nuisance. In a court of law, the question always asked in depositions is: "Could you have foreseen that the device would cause inconveniences when operated that would have forced the owner/operator to circumvent it in order to do his job?" In this case I would have to say YES. A device cannot impede an operator from doing his job by causing nuisance emergency stops

I know your answer will be that the operator MUST complete a daily check list before he operated the machine but if it is the same operator who 'modified' the system, that check sheet will be checked as 'operational' when it actually is not. I also know that the legal system here in Europe is different to that in the USA, but eventually it will happen.

Best regards

Claude Dubé

Managing Director/Geschäftsführer

SALTA Engineering GmbH

Delmenhorst Germany

We did raise this point with Nifty lift prior to publishing and were assured categorically that the settings were such that accidental activation would be unlikely, the video mentioned was set up simply to indicate how it works, and the operator was not put through a real life crushing incident. However Mr Dubé makes an excellent and very valid point and we do agree with the overriding point that he raises.
Ed

Mea Culpa

Hello,

I do not understand, why you still publish pictures of machines where the operators are not wearing harnesses. Do you just highlight missing harnesses in case of accidents and/or fatalities?

I would suggest either to not accept such PR pictures without harness wearing operators or not to blame victims of accidents when they have not been wearing a harness. If you accept such PR pictures as these from UpRight, you should also stop publishing the "Death Wish" series.

Kind regards

Frank

We are not sure which Frank this is, but he makes a very valid point which many other visitors to Vertikal.Net raised with us. The photo that Frank refers to was sent in from Omega lift of Holland (Where there is a massive resistance to wearing harnesses) which builds the new track mounted AB46 for UpRight.

Most manufacturers are now very alert to this issue and we receive very few such pictures these days. We completely missed this one, saying that we then missed another sent in by Aldercote a few weeks later! We passionately promote the wearing of harnesses and short lanyards in boom lifts and do all we can to spread the word. Having said this sometimes we do receive a great photo showing some real benefits or interesting application where the operator is not wearing a harness.. we will take a look at our policy on these...

LWS

Dear Leigh,

I contact you with regards to the letter in your latest issue from Gary Brady. I am the person that Mr Brady failed to name in his letter and feel that I must give my response.

I was employed by Company X prior to them being taken over by Company Y. I moved from Company X to my current employer shortly after the takeover and felt that the requirements of many of my customers that had been with me and Company X for some time were not going to be met by the new suppliers, whom they had moved away from in the past.

There was no need for me to cut the rates as the customers only needed to know from me that they were going to receive the same service as I and my previous company had provided them in the past.

As many of the customers say you can call a Doberman a Poodle but it will always be a Doberman, changing the name of a company will not always work. To this end they were more than happy to move their business and continue to work as before.

My old employer has contacted my new employer on a number of occasions saying that the tactics we were using were unfair so Mr Brady's comments seem a bit rich.

I am hoping that you may print this response as the person in the letter from Mr Brady although I am not named by him many who know the situation know exactly that he was referring to me and I feel that it is important that I should be able to put forward my side of the story.

Yours,

This letter has been edited in parts, in order not to inflame the situation and to try and prevent us ending up in the middle of it. In the same vein, we recommended that the respondent withhold his name. The point he was making was that he left due to concern over the takeover and his role within the new operation, and that those customers who moved with him did so for reasons other than price.

We all know how these things work and we have no way of separating the truth from the fiction. The key point for us is that the access rental industry as a whole needs to raise its level of professionalism, particularly when it comes to sales and marketing.

LWS