

25/08/10

Dear Leigh

I would like to raise an issue through your comments pages.

We have operated truck mounted and all terrain cranes in our family run business since 1982. We have purchased all of our cranes new and direct from various manufacturers and renewed them periodically. We maintain them on a regular basis and have them insurance inspected every six months to comply with current L.O.L.E.R. conditions for the lifting of personnel. I would not be naïve enough to say that I know exactly what each machine has done during it's working life but have a pretty good idea as ultimately the buck stops with me.

I'm sure any crane owner, me included, after experiencing ownership of both types of crane, will tell the same tale of how reliable the older truck mounted cranes provided by Kato and Tadano were and still are compared to modern, 'all singing all dancing' all terrain cranes, in fact the manufacturers themselves have agreed with this on many occasions. "Kato were second to none" is a phrase still to be heard during any gathering of the crane fraternity. It would be no surprise to any owners of modern cranes to hear of breakdowns due to computer errors, coils and electronics, regular problems that simply didn't occur with truck-mounted cranes and the notion of a mechanical fitter needing a laptop computer would have been laughable.

So here is my problem, I recently had a request from a customer to provide a 25 tonne truck mounted crane under ten years old for projects in Broadway and Evesham, Worcestershire, to erect timber framed buildings, a job which is familiar to any crane hirer I'm sure. When I enquired as to why the crane had to be under ten years old my customer said it's what the main contractor stipulates and that as the sub-contractor their hands are tied. Firstly where are these particular machines that are under ten years old? And secondly why, after the history I have explained above should we not be able to provide these perfectly adequate machines that are over ten years old?

Presumably if I bought a second hand 25 tonne truck mounted crane with no idea of how it had been treated or what it had been used for or even if it had ever been maintained or serviced the main contractor would be satisfied. But, seemingly the most important clause for the main contractor is a current test certificate and under ten years old. This to me is utter nonsense.

The only way round the problem for us and our customer was to hire a two axle all terrain crane to them. The main contractor at first declined this as they said the rigger loadings were too heavy leaving us bemused and them without a crane.

They did relent when we proved the rigger loadings were actually less in this case and the hire has gone ahead using this machine.

To compound this scenario we had a two axle all terrain machine booked to go on hire to them, it is three years old and in full current test compliance, so fitted the main contractor's requirements, until it refused to leave our yard as it had broken down due to an electronic fault! (Is there a fitter with a laptop in the house?). Our customer was, as you would expect, anxious as he had deliveries of materials coming to site and needed to get them off loaded, "have you got anything else you can send"? Thank goodness we did, a fully test compliant, recently serviced and with service history from day one of its working life, sixteen year old 25 tonne Kato. "Sorry" was the reply. The only other crane available to us to re-hire at the time was a 1998 25 tonne Kato city crane oops! We had the problem of the breakdown but also the solution of a replacement crane that any contractor in their right mind would have jumped at. Whilst my frustration mounted at this crazy situation, the loads were cancelled and the crane hire put back by two days, while our sixteen year old 25 tonne Kato happily went to work on other sites.

Is Mansells Construction the only company that are happy for their jobs to be held up because of their own ridiculous rules or are there others following this path that we haven't encountered yet? Following the recession in 2009 and the difficult times we have all experienced in our industry can this really be a serious issue to contend with, it seems more like the makings of a good old fashioned Monty Python sketch to me.

Thanks for your time **Simon Ellis**

The who trained him front cover

Dear Sirs

With reference to the cover photo in your August/September issue (two heavy-lift Manitou telehandlers) I can't help but observe that it is not the best photo of good lifting practice.

I have no commercial interest, the company I work for are not in this end of the crane business. Photos can be misleading but it does appear the work men are grouped if not under the load, very near.

The flying buttress appears only to be resting on the forks of the Manitou's if a crane had been used the load would have been captivated by the lifting chains, but this lift appears that if there were a failure of any part of the unit, the load could fall free to the ground.

The Manitou on the right is parked on unmade ground, again a possible opportunity for the vehicle to sink. The area where the lift is taking place has no barriers whatsoever, for what appears to be such an involved lift of a weight of 11 tons.

I'm sure the photo makes it look worse than it is, but that is the problem you have as a publication, it just does not look good.

These have been my own personnel observations and are no way associated with the company I work for.

Regards

Lifting equipment specialist

Name withheld on request.

Hi,

I just thought I would make a suggestion for your "who trained him then?" feature, the suggested scene is the front cover of your Aug/Sept 2010 issue.

The two mobile towers have to be among the worst I've seen in a while. In the foreground the tower has little or no fall prevention at all.

All of the diagonals are set incorrectly and the stabilisers are at the wrong angle to provide sufficient support.

The tower in the background has no castors or baseplates fitted to the base. The rest of the tower is obscured yet looks as promising as the first.

All in all highly incompetent use.....

Ivan Mason

Boss Training Ltd

We have looked at the picture again and as you might expect both of our readers are absolutely correct.

Shame on us for not spotting it as is usual with the cover we were focussed on the overall look of it and then the key product for the particular issue, in this case telehandlers.

Also as a smidgen of a defence we had decided on another telehandler cover and switched back to this one at the last minute – no excuse though for not spotting it, even if we had still gone ahead and used it.

Ed

The following letter is a result of an editorial we ran on line regarding the use of a belt type harness and very short lanyard for visitor demonstrations at exhibitions or for third party truck drivers when loading or unloading boom lifts. Given that all too often they chose to go with nothing.

Dear Leigh,

If we are talking about exhibitions I would prefer to use a belt-type harness as it really is sometimes a bit difficult for the customer having the right "fit" and wear a normal harness correctly. This sometimes is taking a lot of time and could result in an angry customer. Of course it is the sales guys' job to inform him that he, the customer is a lot safer wearing a harness but we know what it is like. The customer does not feel good fumbling with a full harness, especially if there are a few people around who laugh and think it's funny. If it takes too much time to get the harness on, the customer may say "forget it" and walk away. So I think the "belt" could be an alternative for such "short term" actions.

We as a company prefer the jacket-type harness. Everybody in our company who is working on a boom type machine does have one especially for himself and if sized correctly from the beginning it is as easy as wearing a normal jacket.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Holger Johan

POWER-LIFT GmbH

Hi Leigh.

Wind Farm accident

It has never, or is never our intention to be the whistle blower for these type of incidents or indeed, to make light of our competitors misfortune because we have always had the opinion that incidents such as this one is 'out there waiting for us.'.

However, it is annoying when there is a big effort to keep it quiet, which appears to be what is happening to this and more certainly other incidents.

In spite of our best efforts we have had a couple of 'incidents' in recent times and have highlighted them to the relevant industry association and brought up at various safety meetings, so that others might learn from them as well as ourselves.

When one of our own incidents was published some of our competitors went to great lengths to ridicule our modus operandi and make out that we are an 'unsafe company' etc etc – this was fed back to us by the people who were subjected to this smear attempt. Very annoying, considering there is NOT ONE company out there that has a clean sheet, yet try to suggest otherwise.

Basically what I am saying is – don't let them away with it !

Name withheld and letter edited to protect disclosure of the correspondent, which we felt was appropriate in this case.

The letter relates to a comment that we added to an accident on a wind farm in Wales, where a 300 tonne crawler crane tipped over after the road gave way. For what we understand a very similar accident occurred on a wind farm in Scandinavia last year which was pointedly hushed up. Lessons learnt on that accident may well have helped prevent the accident in Wales. Fortunately neither accident claimed a life... At a time when the HSE is calling for near misses to be reported it seems almost immoral that actual accidents are being covered up rather than discussed. If the aviation industry operated this way the number of air crashes would be more the norm than the exception. We really do need to become more mature in this area.

Cranes vs Loader cranes

Ref: Letters to the editor.

Cranes versus Hiabs,

I have been involved in the operation of Hiabs for over 20 years and seen technological improvements move in leaps and bounds in both cranes and Hiabs. The biggest improvement with Hiabs has been the increase in lifting capacity and reductions in weight of the equipment. This has allowed Hiab vehicles to carry a larger load and off-load it without the need for a separate crane.

Over the years there has been a great deal of criticism towards these vehicles from crane companies, mainly, that they should operate under the same rules as a crane, to give a level playing field to the market. This is fine as long as this rule swings and operates both ways.

Now at present this does not seem to happen, for example:

Trucks operate on white diesel, cranes operate on red diesel.

Trucks have six weekly service regimes and an annual MOT as specified by the Department of Transport. Cranes have no annual MOT - even though they can weigh in excess of 60 tonnes, which is far heavier than any UK truck, operated under standard construction and use regulations.

Cranes do not have tachographs fitted.

We are now forced as truck drivers, to undergo Drivers CPC training every five years, to ensure our licences remain valid and that we comply with the law. The CPA is looking for an exemption for crane operators, given that road travel is not the main purpose of work for the crane.

Correct me if I am wrong, but crane companies has been complaining for years that Hiab vehicles are doing exactly the same work on site as a crane, but under different rules, hence the new British Standard 7121 part 4 which relates specifically to Hiab type cranes. So on that understanding, can we please stop these complaints that Hiabs do not operate under the same rules as cranes. From my personal point of view, we Hiab operators are getting the raw end of the deal, all the costs and taxes are levied heavier against us and not on the crane companies.

Our service records and operating procedures are scrutinised by the Department of Transport, ensuring that we are fit and proper to hold operators licences to run these vehicles. I cannot count the number of cranes that I have seen operating on site and travelling on the road, that only look fit for the scrap yard.

So please, please put us on an even keel and allow us the same benefits as crane companies!!!!!!!

Please publish this information for the crane companies to see.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Seddon

Liverpool, England.



Dear Sir,

In response to the outrigger feature that you carried in your October issue, the members of the Temporary Works Forum have agreed the following response.

The Temporary Works Forum (TWF) is an industry group established to provide commentary, advice and guidance on all matters relating to temporary works. It is open to all.

The TWF agrees that there are too many accidents due to inadequate outrigger pad foundations for crane outriggers, however we do not agree with all the conclusions contained within the feature and suggest an alternative method where each part of the lift is dealt with by a person competent to deal with the relevant issues.

A crane lift is planned by the Appointed Person who has training and experience in the use of cranes. The short amount of training, in the Appointed Person (BS7121) Safe use of Cranes Course, for outrigger foundations is inadequate and in some respects inaccurate. Many APs leave the training course confused about the difference between load and pressure. Consequently the design of the outrigger foundation and selection of a factor of safety is best left to a competent engineer.

The Appointed Person is required to supply an accurate outrigger load (in tonnes) to the engineer designing the foundation. This is best determined from crane manufacturer's charts or software (Licon, Cranimax etc). The so called '75%' rule or '100% rules' are not rules at all; they are just approximations which can be significantly misleading and should not be used. Any crane supplier has a duty to supply the user with information to safely use the crane and that includes an accurate outrigger load.

Where a specific lift has been planned this needs to be the outrigger load for the relevant configuration and total load lifted. Where a crane is supplied to a site for general duties, the load should be the maximum possible for the crane for any configuration and load lifted.

The bearing capacity of ground is not a fixed figure; it varies according to the size and shape of the outrigger foundation. This is more complicated for layered ground which is usually the case on construction sites.

It is also influenced by what the ground is or contains; loosely filled trenches and buried drainage are particularly hazardous. It is best if the engineer designing the outrigger foundation is given the accurate load on the outrigger then determines the size of the pad foundation required to carry that load and designs, and selects a foundation of sufficient strength and stiffness to spread the load. The site team will need to verify that the ground conditions assumed by the design do exist in practice.

The system used by the piling industry where the piling contractor provides the main/principal contractor with the load from the piling rig then the main/principal contractor is required to get a platform designed and installed for that rig has merits. The piling contractor will not start work until the main/principal contractor has signed to say that the platform has been designed to carry the loads from the piling rig. We strongly suggest that APs should not be able to use their judgement on the matter of pad foundations. In all cases the foundation should be designed by a competent engineer. The crane supplier has a duty to provide his workforce with a safe place of work and part of this requirement is a satisfactory outrigger foundation for the crane. Where the crane is to be used on small sites or is hired by a private individual then it might be necessary for the crane supplier to employ an engineer to design the foundation.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Markham

On behalf of the members of the Temporary Works Forum

Proposed method for safe use of cranes

Appointed Person (AP) inspects Job, prepares outline Lift Plan and calculates outrigger point load (in TONNES) using Software or Chart from Crane Supplier.

Contractor Arranges for foundation design -
a. Size of foundation
b. Spreaders of suitable strength and stiffness

AP completes lift plan incorporating foundation/spreader requirements

Contractor/Crane Supplier to liaise and arrange for load spreaders to be on site

Crane and load spreading equipment to site. Before crane sets up main/principal contractor to sign permit to lift

Suitable software includes.

Licon, Cranimax or Spreadsheet from the Crane Supplier.

Design by a Competent Engineer.

Could be timbers, load spreaders by site, alimats or steel pads from the crane supplier, as determined by the Competent Engineer.

Letters to the editor: Please send letters to the editor: Cranes&Access: PO Box 6998, Brackley NN13 5WY, UK.

We reserve the right to edit letters for length. We also point out that letters are the personal views of our readers and not necessarily the views of the Vertical Press Ltd or its staff.

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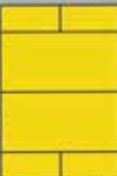
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