

CPA Crane Interest Group

This year's CPA Crane Interest Group meeting, in the UK was well attended – perhaps anticipating a lively discussion around the agenda topics. In reality it was 'business as usual' with most speakers re-capping on current issues although there was one area – HSE cost recovery – that did raise a few hackles.

The CPA has done some sterling work over the past few years much of it involving legislation which can drag on for several years, so much of this year's meeting dealt with topics already familiar to readers of *Cranes & Access*.



Ian Simpson

Four Year overload tests

After the opening remarks by chairman Neil Partridge, Tim Watson discussed four year overload testing and scope of examination. Following the introduction of the Best Practice Guide last year and Technical Information Note 102, a position paper by the FEM and even a letter from the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) all of which came out against such overload testing, some major contractors are still not convinced and continue to request proof of the four year overload test. Several in the audience thought that some CPCS trainers still taught that the overload test was still mandatory? If you have any problems with contractors contact Colin Wood of the CPA.

Lifting people with cranes

Watson moved on to lifting people with cranes at work. Put simply, cranes are not designed to lift people (as per the Machinery Directive) although there are various exceptions in different countries. The UK, Loler rules says that people

can only be lifted 'exceptional circumstances' i.e. when there is absolutely no alternative, for example during a tower crane rescue. In these circumstances clear steps are outlined in BS7121 clause 23.1 which says the crane must have twice the required capacity, a restricted speed, minimum hoist rope diameter, hook with safety catch etc etc. It must also be organised properly, supervised, risk assessed, the crane operator must not leave the controls, safety harnesses/lanyards must be used and there must be a rescue plan.

Ian Simpson of the HSE stated his employer's position on the recent 'leisure' lifting of people that has been in the news recently. These include 'Dinner in the Sky', the Chelsea Hanging Garden and Bungee Jumping. In a nutshell, Simpson said the HSE does not have a problem with people being lifted by a crane so long as the main purpose was a leisure activity and as long as it follows the usual precautions such as being well planned and managed.

Cranes obviously have to be CE market and the Health and Safety at Work Act applied so 'sensible precautions had to be taken including a rescue contingency'. He said that there was no reason why crane rental companies should not be involved in these activities. However as they would be the 'experienced' and 'knowledgeable' lifting party in the process, they should ensure that the whole process is carried out in a safe manner – and not the client.

Paying for the HSE

The audience came to life when Simpson outlined the HSE's plans to recover costs from offenders. He said that the HSE budget has been



cut by about 35 percent over the next three years and that although there had been cost reductions, such as the number of offices cut from 27 to 23, the department was looking to find half the savings – i.e. 17.5 percent – from charging offenders. Each inspector would be charged out at £130 an hour where there was a material (affecting safety) fault but not for a simple technical fault, with companies invoiced on a monthly basis. The difference between material and technical was illustrated as follows: The lack of test paperwork for a set of slings is a technical fault, however using poor or damaged slings is a material fault.

It was pointed out that the construction sector has a one in five probability of receiving a prohibition

notice after inspection, so obviously this is where inspectors will concentrate their efforts. Those companies not complying with legislation will obviously be more at risk of facing high HSE charges.

Kevin Minton updated on medical fitness, operator training and competence and outlined the early work of the Strategic Forum for Construction Plant Safety (the 'soggy ground' group) which is looking at ground conditions, outrigger mats etc in a similar way to the recent IPAF initiative.

Colin Wood wrapped the meeting up very quickly although many thought that given a number of recent accidents MOT testing for cranes was a topic that needed further discussion.



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