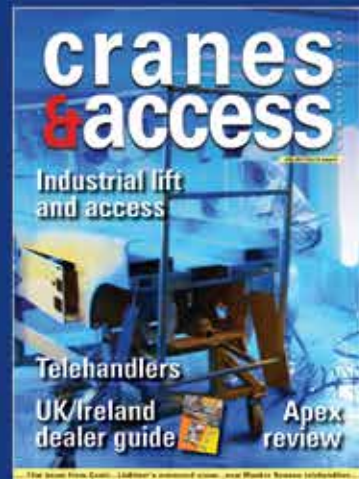
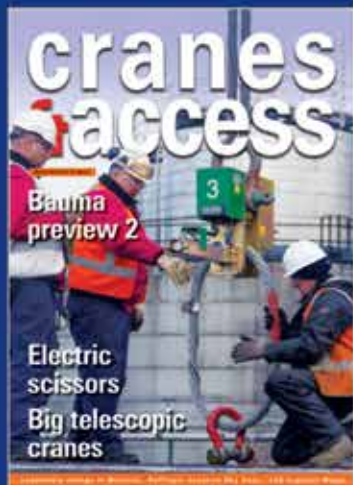
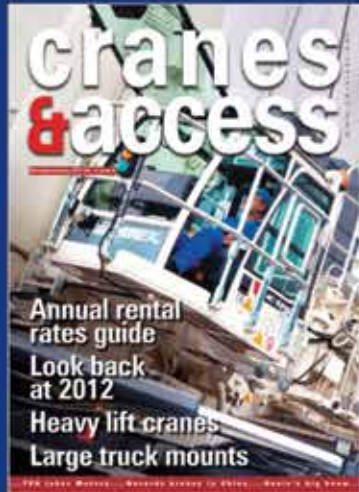


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Letters



Hi Leigh,

Hope you are well, my name is Tim Proud, I am the managing director of Dewsbury and Proud Ltd, we are a mobile crane hire and contract lifting company based in the Midlands and have 35 cranes including a couple of Maeda mini cranes. We operate mainly as a taxi crane company and have been in business since 1977, we have a staff of around 50 people.

When I started my career in the crane sector our work was mainly machine/industrial type work, the Black Country was a heavily industrialised area and we did very little construction type work, words such as 'Contract Lifting' and 'Best Practise Guide' had not yet been invented!

I view your website and read your publication regularly and with great interest, with this in mind I wondered if you may have any comments or suggestions about what I have written below, I would love to hear any comments you may have as your position within the industry is fairly unique. I would like to generate a debate, create awareness, listen to suggestions and ultimately improve our industry standards all while serving as the CEO of a company whose job description includes the line 'profit and growth'.

So the reason I am writing to you is to express my concern at the standards we have within our industry, whilst some are desperate to improve the safety and training, others are flouting the law to make a fast buck and I can assure you that the size of company doesn't necessarily come into this. There are some very good large companies, smaller companies and lifting companies that don't own their own machines who offer a complete service at a reasonable price, there are also the opposite, companies which do not complete the job in a professional manner, don't invest in training people or machines, and have a complete disregard or ignorance of the legislation involved.

I have had crane people ring me up to clarify a situation who aren't aware of BS7121, longstanding members of the industry who don't understand the difference between an ACOP, Standard or Best Practice Guide, who hide behind office doors and hope they never have an incident or who disappear quickly from site when something goes wrong, why do these people not protect themselves!?

I recently had an incident where I had a call for a slinger/signaller from another crane hire company, to work with their crane on a Contract Lift the following day. We took the information the night before and sent our guy to site for the following morning at 8am. On arrival our employee rung up and said that the crane had arrived with a qualified CPCS operator, there was a lift plan in the cab but there was no lift supervisor on site. He said the job and paperwork appear to be correct (the man I sent actually is a qualified AP, L/S, S/S and operator) it was just that there was no Supervisor on site. I rang the crane hire company who told me that the crane operator was a lift supervisor and therefore would we please continue working, or they would get someone else in to carry out the slinging duties. They said the operator could act as the lift supervisor and actually the crane had a remote control operating unit, so he could get out of the cab, and therefore everything

would be fine. The operator explained to my employee that this was common and in fact on some occasions he acts as the operator, supervisor and slinger. He said that his manager had explained in great detail that this was okay, and he was satisfied that he knew what he was doing.

Two days later I sent an AP to look at a simple job a few miles away from our depot, this time when he got to site we discovered that we were too late and that other crane company had said they would supply a crane on a 'contract lift' basis to carry out the operation. The customer initially thought that my AP was there to risk assess the job, complete the paperwork then act as a Lift Supervisor. As we were leaving the competitors crane arrived and after exchanging a few polite words the crane proceeded to rig up and carry out the job. My AP hung around and watched as the operator ticked a few boxes on a piece of A4 paper (I assume the tool box talk was being completed at that point), rigged the crane, jumped out of the cab and slung the load, completed the lift and then de-rigged the crane.

Both of the above incidents were performed by the same company but I can assure you they are not alone in this, it actually states on their website "we give you peace of mind that that all lifting operations will comply fully with BS7121 and be performed by competent, trained staff".

I have had a request from a few members of our operating staff to clarify in writing the law regarding the above issue, we discussed the role of a Crane Supervisor as described in BS7121 and the section where it describes the minimum attributes of personnel, it clearly states: "If the crane supervisor is also a crane driver, then the crane supervisor should not operate any crane involved in the lifting operation being supervised".

The problem going forward is that some companies are educating their own staff and customers that this way of operating is completely safe and legally correct. It is this sort of bad practice that we need to address as an industry and this is only one small issue. Suggestions such as MOT's on cranes, testing and inspection based on usage and cycles, rather than the standard 12 monthly inspection, operator working hours etc... I could go on!

New products can affect the ability to set standards, new types of machines are entering the market, that can be classed as a crane, a lorry loader or a telehandler for example, and with different rules applying for each type of machine we may need some clarification from the manufacturers as to what that particular machine can be safely used for. A very grey area and confusing it may be but with regards to the Crane Hire companies I think they should know better!

May I suggest that you survey members of the CPA for example, this could include questions and opinions about the above, or maybe we should consider some industry policing? Maybe by the CPA? I'm not sure what the answers are or how we should go about it, I just know that what I see on a daily basis is nowhere near where it should be. I have no objection to a company working as cheaply as possible, as long as we are all adhering to the same rules and standards.

Continued on page 69

I understand that in this modern world the cost of improvement in standards and safety is tough but it is 100% necessary, I am sure that the mind-set alters with a visit to the Coroners Court, but by then it is too late. Unfortunately we read about these issues every day, the industry has improved greatly over the last 30 years but we still have a very long way to go to achieve the levels of some other industries.

I am all for competition and thrive under the pressures of this industry but we need to increase rates to allow for training, testing, auditing, monitoring and improving standards, how many crane hire companies in the UK have their own in-house qualified Health and Safety Director? I know I haven't. Listen if you can squeeze a job in the afternoon and save your customer a few quid then that's great but let's not do that by putting our company, staff and customers at risk!

Kind Regards

Tim Proud

Tim Proud makes some very good points in this detailed and thoughtful letter. I am not sure that I agree with him on every point he makes, for example I think there is a case when carrying out straight forward simple lifts, for the operator to assess the job, figure out a lift plan, sling the load and then carry out the lift. This happens every day of the week with loader cranes and telehandlers. Although at the moment there is no question that this does not comply with current standards and best practice.

There is a tendency to treat the crane operator as a lever puller and delegate much of what should or could be his responsibility to others. I would like to see the role of crane operator being elevated, with more responsibility and more respect. After all a crane operator is responsible for highly sophisticated machine, costing anything from £400,000 to several million, which if improperly handled can cause devastation over a wide area. In many respects this is no different to that of a commercial aircraft pilot, yet all too often we treat a crane operator as though he is a glorified tractor driver.

Where I profoundly agree with Tim Proud is over the need for the industry to clarify the situation beyond all doubt - and to spread the word so the sort of misinformation that this letter refers to stands no chance of gaining any traction. The problem comes from rules or regulations that are not well suited to the real world when it comes to a good deal of taxi crane applications. If you hand down rules that are impractical, people will find ways around them or bend them to breaking point. As the letter highlights, we currently have a situation where if you adhere to the rules as they are clearly written you will lose business, do this too often and you court insolvency. So all you are faced with the unreasonable choice of bending the rules yourself and gambling that all will be well, or go hungry. This is totally unacceptable and should not be allowed to continue. We all know it goes on and yet it is allowed to continue.

We would very happy to act as a forum on this issue and to help in any way we can, but I also think that the time is right for the industry association and its members to demand that this situation is cleared up in a way that makes the situation crystal clear BUT which does not disadvantage the crane hire industry compared to the many alternative lifting solutions that now exist.

Please do let us know what you think, either publicly or confidentially, we would be happy to collate all the input and pass it on.

Leigh Sparrow

Publisher

Dear Editor,

HSE fines in Ipswich highlight the need for more training in dealing with killer asbestos.

Following a Health & Safety Executive investigation, Chelmsford magistrates fined an unscrupulous Ipswich roofing contractor £10,000 last week for handling asbestos at a farm in Essex without the correct certification or training. In dealing with the substance improperly he exposed staff to deadly cancer causing spores. As general manager of the UK Asbestos Training Association (UKATA) I'd like to remind your readers of the dangers of asbestos and that it's important that only those with the correct training should handle it.

Asbestos, which is still the biggest workplace killer in the UK, causes the rare and incurable form of lung cancer known as mesothelioma. The danger occurs when materials containing asbestos are disturbed or damaged, leading to the deadly spores of the 'hidden killer' to be released into the atmosphere where they are inhaled. It's important that those in the construction trade likely to come into contact with asbestos know how to identify it and deal with it safely.

Dealing with asbestos without the full training and knowledge can lead to putting both your own health and the health of those around you in jeopardy - that's the reason why the Health & Safety Executive continues to dish out fines. Those in the construction industry should consult our list of approved members in order to gain the correct certification at www.ukata.org.uk

Craig Evans

General manager, UKATA

Open letter to Inpex Corporation

The following was posted as a public letter on our website following a report on the dropping of a large exhaust stack during a tandem lift at the Blaydin Point natural gas processing plant near Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. Shortly after the incident occurred - no injuries were reported - the plant management enforced a tough no photography and information blanket on the staff at the site, some of whom complained that they were not informed on what had occurred.

FAO Mr Toshiaki Kitamura CEO
Inpex Corporation
Tokyo Japan. 107-6332

Dear Mr Kitamura,

Re Dropped Column on CNG Plant, Darwin, Australia.

FYI only, 28 Men and Women were Killed in 16 Separate Crane and Lifting Incidents in the West during 2014. So your desire to avoid any Corporate embarrassment is understandable but misguided, as there is No PLACE for SECRECY where Crane Safety is involved.

Therefore please instruct your staff to lift the veil of Secrecy, then investigate the Root Cause of this Dropped Load Incident, and publish this report to the entire world, as we need to know the 5xW's to avoid any repetition of this potentially Fatal Dropped Load.

Why...Because Crane Safety affects all of us and in equal Measures too. Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott should also be monitoring this situation very closely and be prepared to intervene, as this veil of Secrecy should be Ripped Aside in the cause of Crane Safety.

Worker Safety is my Core Value, please make it a core value of the Inpex Corporation.

Kind Regards

Mike Ponsonby



On January 18th we received the sad news that Lee Kramer, president of Xtreme manufacturing, had died suddenly that day at the age of just 67. It seems that he suffered a complication with pneumonia and was surrounded by his family and close friends at the end.

Lee was born in Waukegan, Illinois, and qualified as a mechanical engineering at the University of Illinois, before starting his career as a mechanical engineer with the Hough Company (which later became International Harvester, then part of Dresser Industries, finally merging with Komatsu to form Komatsu-Dresser. From there he moved on to Blount and then Timberjack.

He joined the access industry in 1999 as engineering manager with UpRight, in Selma California and would have been involved with the company's entrance into the telehandler market, as well as working the new boom lifts that the company was introducing. In 2003 he joined Don Ahern to set up Fresno Engineering Design Group, which became Xtreme Manufacturing. As vice president engineering, he was responsible for developing the company's all new range of telescopic handlers, of which

there is now a full range. He was later appointed president of the growing business, which now includes Snorkel aerial work platforms.

A statement from the company shortly after the news broke, said: "Lee was not only our leader, he was our mentor and our friend. He will be greatly missed by all of us at Xtreme Manufacturing, and by all who knew him. He was a true gentleman, an exceptionally kind and compassionate man who made a positive contribution to the lives of everyone who worked with him".

He leaves behind Joan, his wife of 34 years, son, Justin Lee and daughter, Jordan Lynn. Lee was one of the world's true gentlemen, always completely professional, rational, consistent and a thoroughly decent man. He will be missed by everyone who knew him.



Following his sudden passing a memorial fund has been set up in his name which will be used to benefit college engineering students. Those wishing to make a donation to the fund should make cheques payable to 'Memorial Fund for Lee Kramer'. Deposits can be sent to Plaza Bank, 8275 W. Flamingo Road, Las Vegas NV 89147, USA



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