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## On the cover:

UK company Extreme Wind Services with its wind turbine blade cleaning solution the EX-1. Mounted on a 70 metre Palfinger truck mounted platform it uses large rotating brushes similar to a car wash.



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Mark Darwin caught up with Philippe Cohet, Manitowoc executive vice president for Europe, Middle East and Africa before Intermat and asked why the company had decided not to attend, his thoughts on the recent ESTA Wind Conference, changes in the UK distribution of Potain tower cranes and about the 10th anniversary of the Manitowoc Crane Group.

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Bernard James was a well-known and widely respected safety inspector in the UK and a strong supporter of the powered access industry. He was charged with taking the fledgling aerial lift industry in the UK 'under his wing' and became closely involved with and widely respected within the powered access industry. We take a brief look at his life and career.

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**c&a**  
comment



## FEM on the turn?

There are some stories that just will not go away. Last summer Diarmuid Gavin's Sky Garden at the Chelsea Flower Show attracted a lot of media interest winning a gold medal, but also because it lifted people with a crane for 'entertainment' purposes.

At the time this was at odds with the Health and Safety Executive and the European material handling federation - the FEM - which had recently published advice virtually banning the lifting of people with cranes.

The HSE has since modified, or 'clarified' its position on this and while it would take a different view in a work situation, it is happy for this sort of 'entertainment' to take place so long as reasonable precautions have been taken - particularly by the crane operator.

In this issue we cover Nik Wallenda's planned crossing of the Niagara Falls on a tightrope suspended from a mobile crane. Admittedly Wallenda had to 'jump through hoops' to gain permission, as it required local laws to be changed on both sides of the USA/Canada border. Canada banned tightrope crossings a hundred years ago following a number of deaths attempting the feat.

Wallenda often uses cranes to support one or both sides of his tight rope, usually teaming up with Lomma cranes - yes the Lomma cranes just acquitted of all charges in the fatal tower crane collapse in New York in 2008 but that's another story...

The most interesting of all this is that the FEM has quietly issued a new position paper - FEM N 0284 - which says - and I quote: "FEM believes that a mobile crane can be used to lift persons if additional requirements are fulfilled."

This about turn obviously occurred after 'discussions' with Dinner in the Sky owners as the Paper goes on to say that "Dinner in the Sky could achieve compliance with the Machinery Directive and other relevant regulations and if assessed by a third party."

Good news for those wanting to be lifted by a crane, but what about FEM? Totally banning something is much more difficult than it might seem, which is why seasoned professionals like the HSE tend to avoid definitive statements. When an organisation hands down such a clear edict, that is then largely ignored, it risks bringing its integrity or at least its effectiveness and relevance into doubt.

Perhaps the HSE has got it right - "yes but only after taking all reasonable precautions"?

Niagara Parks did say that the Wallenda approval is a "unique one-time situation" and that he was able to prove that he had proper controls and safety measures in place. Well done Niagara Parks. But it also said that it would only consider such requests from skilled professionals once every 20 years.....

Mark Darwin

Please mail, email or fax any comments you may have, to the editor, stating if we may publish them or not.

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