



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 Vertikal Press Ltd or its staff.

Dear Sir,

The members of the UCOA would like the CPA, HSE, and all the other people representing the tower crane industry to consider, the following things that the operators of tower cranes think should be done to help the crane industry. We would like you to bring these ideas up at your next meeting on tower cranes.

1. We feel there should be a return to a sort of apprentice type course where the company starts a young lad on the books. He is then placed with an experienced driver where he can learn to operate in all conditions, not only all weather conditions but in the dark and when working blind with radios, all these things he will not learn at the CITB Bircham Newton. After he has reached a reasonable level of confidence he would then go to the CITB for the technical data and to sit a test on one of their cranes, with say four or five tasks to perform in a set time.

We understand the cost involved but the government has funds for training programs, and the extra cost can be passed on to the client who will put all this onto the cost when they tender for a contract. Additionally you could also ask for legislation to be put in place for training, where tax concessions could be claimed, these are only ideas that will help achieve a proper training program, instead of young lads investing £3,000 of their own money and finding they cannot get a job and if they do, it is short lived because they are too slow for the client. Most of the older drivers sat with experienced drivers when they were learning and we feel that the industry needs to go back to what works best.

2. This next point will help the first one; we believe that two operators should be required for each tower crane on site. This will allow the drivers to have proper tea breaks, toilet breaks, and allow them to walk about for a time to reduce the risk of DVT, (Deep Vein Thrombosis). As some of you will be aware most clients now require the tower cranes to work without stopping for tea or meal breaks, making all the other trades split there meal breaks, as with the banksman.

3. The training of personnel on site to operate self erecting tower cranes to stop, we feel the cavalier attitude by the company's that do this is frightening. These cranes are as difficult to operate as static tower cranes and should be operated by properly trained operators, not some joiner picked from the bait cabin.

4. The Lantra Awards, in their agenda they have a program for deaf people to be trained to operate plant machinery, we think this is a very bad idea for the construction industry, as a construction site is not the place for someone who cannot hear any commands shouted at him in an emergency, certainly not a crane operator. We hope this will be removed from the Lantra programme.

These are just some of the ideas that we think the Industry should be trying to achieve to improve an Industry that at the moment is going backwards in its outlook, not forwards, we need to be able to promote the crane industry as a very professional Career. If you look at Airlines, they have two pilots on each flight and two surgeons are present at each operation, so why not two drivers to each machine?

Yours Sincerely

John Batey

Chairman

United Crane Operators Association

Dear Sir,

Re not wearing harnesses

The service engineers that I work with and that I know at other companies, all agree that wearing harnesses in our own yard/test area is a No, but on site we all use them in booms but not scissors. When working machines in the yard they have already been tested through all cycles from the ground and examined during the PDI before we go elevated.

There are no curbs to 'fall off', no vehicles to strike the platform and there is no reason to get into a partial tip situation as the ground situation is known and secure. Unlike the operator who only leaves the basket 2 or 3 times in a shift we are constantly in and out of the baskets and find the lanyard becomes a trip/fall hazard.

Perhaps our freedom to choose should remain in the depots but not on site?. Please don't encourage the 'nanny state' to make blanket decisions, but consider a silent minority that have to try work in an industry that is demanding.

We work with more and more PPE, regardless of the work we are carrying out. eg wearing hard hat, eye protection, Hi-Viz jacket, long sleeves, gloves and all while trying to change wires on a starter motor when you have crawled into a 18 inch space under a scissor platform - on top of the engine compartment, behind the guards with your arm down the back of the engine, in 90 degree temperatures, in an area where no vehicles can possibly approach due to a wall, trenches and the van. No cranes in the area and no one else working within 40 feet. But the safety officer demands to know why I am not wearing my PPE? (its hanging on the guardrails) he says he will get me banned from all the contractors sites!

What ever happened to 'you are your own safety officer'. Some of the site safety officers are 'jobsworths' that will not listen to reason and follow the rules made by someone hundreds of miles away who has not visited the particular site and will not consider special situations where wearing PPE makes the job more hazardous. This not only applies to the access industry but to all construction equipment engineers.

I hope this helps you see the engineers point of view, please note if we are not happy with our situation we can still wear an harness at our own choice.

Name withheld at correspondents request.