

Readers Letters



Dear Mr Editor,

Your excellent online report of a UNIC Mini Crawler Crane being lifted 283 metres (or 928 feet) to the roof of New Building titled 'The Shard' in London UK, raises a number of uniquely important questions about a uniquely hazardous lifting operation at such an altitude. For example-

1. Has a Risk Assessment (RA) & method statement been completed for this lengthy series of lifts?
2. Is this R.A. in line with The LOLER Regs 1998 and British Standard 7121?
3. Has an 'Appointed Person' been appointed for this series of roof level lifts?
4. Does the RA take account of this altitude of 283 Metres, or 928 Feet above ground level?
5. Has the SLI been re-calibrated to take account of wind speeds and gusts at 283 metres?
6. How will the wind speed be measured (using the Beaufort Scale) by this crane?
7. Has the wind side loading already been calculated on that square section hydraulic boom?
8. Has the exponential effect of wind side loadings been calculated, when the boom is extended?
9. How will this mini-crawler crane be anchored down to the structure in high winds?
10. Has wind-loading been calculated in advance on largest square area glass panels to be lifted?

Before anyone replies to say "We know what we are doing", always remember that the men working at ground level also have to be considered in the RA, for they will be working underneath this crane. For if crane stability 283 metres above them is affected by the powerful and dangerous influence of the wind on cranes and lifting operations, then they will be put at risk. So these additional hazards have to be considered and assessed now, for without them the managing director could find him or herself facing a manslaughter charge in the event of a fatality, especially since the introduction of The Corporate Manslaughter Act in April 2008.

Please remember that ignorance of the law is no defence and that its not acceptable to wait for the first gust of wind induced incident, for the next time it could be you.

Kind Regards

Mike Ponsonby

Mr Ponsonby also contacted Unic distributor GGR who assured him that it had carried out a very thorough risk assessment and high standards of safety were implemented on the project. The fact is that mini cranes had also been used for the vast majority of cladding lifting throughout the construction of this building, without a single incident. We believe that the use of mini cranes in this application is at the very least as safe as the tower cranes they are likely to replace – being closer to the work, and a whole lot safer and more efficient than most other methods. However he makes a point in that if such diligence was applied to all lifting work there would be a massive reduction in accidents. Ed

Dear Member,

Maintenance of Mobile Crane Road-going Chassis

You will be aware that over the last few years there have been a number of road traffic accidents, including some fatalities, where mobile cranes have been involved. One of these involved the death of a mother and her two children.

In the light of this we would like to remind all our mobile crane owning members that they have a legal duty to maintain all parts of their cranes in a safe condition at all times. This is required by two sets of regulations:-

- When the crane is being used off the public highway adequate maintenance is required by Regulation 5 of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

- When the crane is being driven on the public highway, Regulation 100 of The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations requires that mobile crane chassis are maintained so ".....that no danger is caused or is likely to be caused to any person in or on the vehicle or on a road."

Further guidance on mobile crane maintenance is given in the CPA Best Practice Guide on Maintenance, Inspection and Through Examination of Mobile Cranes which can be downloaded from the CPA website free of charge at <http://www.cpa.uk.net/p/Safety-Leaflets/>

Following a recent Fatal Accident Enquiry into a road accident involving a mobile crane in Scotland, the Sherriff conducting the FAI recommended that "the United Kingdom Government enact legislation as a matter of urgency with the effect of removing the current exemption applying to mobile cranes from undergoing a compulsory regular test of roadworthiness". In 2010 the Department for Transport consulted widely on the removal of the exemption of mobile cranes and other vehicle from annual MOT testing. We understand that the DfT are in favour of removing the exemption and are currently working towards this.

The removal of the exemption from mobile cranes was discussed at the recent CPA Crane Interest Group Steering Committee meeting. The members of the Steering Group were, in principle, in favour of an annual roadworthiness test for mobile cranes as it was seen as a benefit in reducing road accidents involving mobile cranes. They were however concerned at the current lack of suitable test facilities for mobile cranes, particularly those over 50 tonne capacity, and would want any removal of the current exemption to have a suitable transition period. This would allow time for the development of suitable test facilities for all sizes of mobile crane, in sufficient number and geographical spread to ensure minimum downtime and loss of revenue to mobile crane owners. We believe that it is essential that if the current exemption is to be removed the DfT must enter into full dialogue with affected organisations, such as the CPA, to ensure that sufficient suitable test facilities are put in place before annual roadworthiness tests for mobile cranes are introduced.

Yours sincerely

Neil Partridge Colin Wood

Chairman Chief Executive

Pads too small

Dear Editor,

Having had a close look at the photograph on your web site of a machine in Scotland I feel I must write to inform readers of serious potential accident waiting to happen in the way the machine is set up in relation to the size of the spreader plates used.

The machine in use is a telescopic platform mounted on an 18,000kg chassis in which case it is capable of applying a force of up to 80 percent of the total weight of the machine on one jack leg, i.e. $18,000 \times 0.8 = 14,400$ kg. The operator is using standard issue sole-boards of approximately 600mm x 600mm providing a surface area of 0.36 square metres, which are designed for use on



solid heavily trafficked surfaces such as road ways and car parks, not pavements!!

The minimum requirement for a pavement for this size of machine would be approximately 1,100mm x 1,100mm 1.21 square metres, which is 3.36 times the surface area of the pad in use. All users of heavy, HGV machines should equip their operators with larger/longer spreader plates for use on pavements/pedestrian areas.

The above figures are a rough guide and given without prejudice as a basic rule of thumb. Currently I am working with IPAF and a firm of structural engineers to produce solid guidance on this subject which will be available shortly however I felt compelled to write this morning having seen the photograph.

Gordon Leicester

Facelift

Bad equipment

I just thought I'd send you guys a picture of part of the cage of an eighty foot Genie cherry picker supplied for use by a big yellow crane company in Scotland. It shows the metalwork rusted clean through right above the lanyard attachment point. Looks like they forgot to put some blue paint over that particular bit of rust.

This was the first of three machines we were supplied with after asking for a Genie S65. First we got a Genie S80 which was too wide for the area we wanted to work, then we got a Genie Z60 which was just a bit short of the 65' we actually needed, then they sent a JLG which worked, but was not originally chosen because of their sensitive tilt alarms which don't always handle city centre squares that have anything other than spirit-level accurate tarmac.

This sort of ill maintained equipment is quite common in Scotland, which is traditionally used as a dumping ground for decrepit access equipment that is too old to sell-on. There's also a tendency to dumb down the requirements for engineers that are supposed to maintain them.

With one large scaffolding company I had a machine on site that had a sticky fuel shut-off solenoid that would not work once the machine had heated up. This necessitated deliberately stalling the machine to stop the engine, as even the emergency stop wouldn't kill it. The 'engineer' duly arrived and since the machine was cold the valve worked at that point. He announced that he had a policy of only changing components when they failed, completely and refused to repair the equipment. I turned it on and then delayed him with casual chat while it heated up, during which I also mentioned that the crawl ceased to function when the machine was extended. He announced that it was because when the boom is up it takes all the electricity away from the base and that stops the crawl working. Seriously? I mean does he think we're that dumb? In the meantime the machine had heated up and failed to stop as I had described in the first place. He reluctantly changed the worn solenoid. After a catalogue of machines that systematically left trails of hydraulic oil everywhere they were moved we dumped that company for good.

It's kind of ironic that I was obliged to pay through the nose to sit a patronising IPAF test at their premises. But then when it came to the kit hey IPAF! 'nuff said.

It's not all doom and gloom in Scotland though.

One company that has always provided clean, new and well maintained machines has been Nationwide. It's just a shame that my penny pinching employers use the cheapest equipment they can find.



This letter came in with the photo, there was no attempt to hide any names and appears genuine, although the plug at the bottom had us wondering. We asked if we could publish the letter with the senders name, but have not received a response from him, so as we go to press, have chosen to leave it off. We ummed and ahhhed about publishing the letter as is, given that it seems a little partisan, but as an example of what goes on we followed our normal policy of avoiding censorship as long as the letter does not break any decency or other laws. Ed

Capital investment

Sir,

As a small British manufacturer (yes we do still exist), I urge the Chancellor to do two things in his Budget to boost business and create jobs.

1. Increase the tax relief on capital investment to £200,000 and keep it there for the next five years.
2. Unless Britain's cumbersome big banks change their attitude and start lending to small firms again, Mr Osborne should make it easier for the nimbler German banks to work their magic over here. That way, UK companies might have a chance of competing with Germany's.

Sincerely

Arnab Dutt

Managing director, Texane Ltd

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