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## On the cover:

A Genie Z60/34 working on the Souter Lighthouse, Tyne and Wear, for English Heritage. For full story see page 21.



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In our annual in-depth look at articulated self propelled booms we check out the growing range of 50 to 51 ft models. Are they taking over from the all-popular 45 ft models? We also review the top end of the market now that there is a real choice of product offerings in the 125 to 135 ft platform height. While product development has been only steady, we find a surprising number of interesting developments, particularly in the growing Nifty range.

## 2006 Rental rate survey 25



Our seventh annual rental rate survey shows the UK and Irish markets in a buoyant mood for both cranes and access, while telehandlers are a little less certain. 2006 has certainly been a better year than many had predicted. Most companies that responded said that rates had increased and that 2007 looked stable to good. Fleets have also continued to expand.

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Sales of tracked 'spider boom' aerial lifts have soared in recent years. We explore the rarer self propelled crawler lifts, look at some very special crawler mounted scissor lifts and ask why they are not more popular in the UK and Ireland?



## SAIE 41

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# c&a

comment



The UK Health and Safety Executive has informed tower crane rental companies that life is about to change and that new rules will be applied in respect to tower crane erection and inspections. It justifies what some feel is a heavy handed over-reaction, with the fact that six people have died in the UK over the past four years in an industry that it estimates employs less than 2,000.

What has brought this to a sudden head was the very public accident in Battersea, London, when the top of a 1985 BPR-Richier crane owned by Falcon cranes, became detached from its tower, killing the operator along with a member of the public. Barely two weeks later the boom of a luffing tower crane became detached after colliding with another crane on a site in central London.

Suddenly tower cranes became the dangerous breed of the moment, tweaking this nanny 'government's' tendency to legislate or ban. It is extremely likely that the HSE has been told to 'sort it' or at least to provide a new policy that might serve as a suitable sound bite for the government's overstuffed spin machine.

On the other hand seven people - including a totally uninvolved member of the public - have died. Maybe this is a band of cowboys that needs the sheriff to take action?

Sadly while this may have been the case, the UK tower crane industry has taken a close look at itself over the past two years and introduced a wide range of new work practices and initiatives to improve professionalism and safety within what is a relatively close knit industry. The Battersea incident is, thank goodness, an extremely rare type of accident and the cause of which should by now have been clearly identified. If lessons are to be learnt the details should be made known.

The previous fatal accident, in which two highly experienced erectors lost their lives, has been clearly attributed to inexplicable occurrence of human error. In that case, the HSE has still not fully disclosed its findings, some two years on. In spite of suggesting that a lack of training might have contributed, it has not informed the company involved if it plans to prosecute or not.

What the tower crane hire industry needs now is for the HSE to quickly report on its findings at Battersea and the more recent collision incident, even if this means issuing a preliminary report for the industry to consider. It most certainly does not need the introduction of new rules imposed from on-high by an inexperienced inspectorate.

Surely the government has learned from the dangerous dogs and hunting laws that a knee jerk regulation is always a mistake.

Hopefully the HSE will have the spine to tell the government that this is not an issue for sound bites or spin and will start sharing information from its investigations so that lessons can be learnt sooner rather than later.

Leigh W Sparrow

*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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