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"Blanket policies cause problems - who is best able to determine risk? Is it the construction company or the person planning the job? I can't tell you what to do, as principle contractors you have to decide yourself on what changes to make."

Joy Jones of the HSE Construction division speaking at the recent IPAF seminar on anti-entrapment devices in London.

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Towers and aerial lifts: All in a day's work

Mobile access towers are good for business. That was the message from PASMA in last month's Cranes & Access when the association invited hire companies, and aerial lift stockists in particular, to add towers to their existing product portfolio.

One company that has long recognised the business benefits of mobile access towers is family owned and run Smiths Equipment Hire - a PASMA member and one of the largest independent hire specialists in North West England.

Headquartered in Blackpool in the resort's original tram sheds, the company was established over 40 years ago having developed from the family's long established coal merchant and haulage operation. Smiths has depots across the region and the business is run by brothers and directors David and Thomas Smith.

cost effectiveness of this simple, straightforward but effective piece of access equipment. It's also true to say that since their introduction in 2005, the Work at Height Regulations have been a noticeable factor in driving demand."

"Across our 10 depots which include Preston, Blackburn and Manchester, we have over 150

The Blackpool tram sheds where the company is now based



Mobile access towers have been an integral part of the company's product range - which includes everything from ladders, alloy towers and aerial work platforms to compaction equipment, compressors and air tools - since it began trading. "No hire specialist worth its salt can afford to ignore towers," says Thomas Smith. "When it comes to access, it's essential that you offer customers a complete range of solutions, one of which will be the most suitable for the job in hand. It could be a simple ladder or stepladder, a set of podium steps, an alloy tower, a boom or scissor lift. Each one has different features and benefits that must be considered."

"What's important is that the right equipment is used in the right way and that the person using it is as safe as possible when working at height. As far as towers are concerned, we've experienced a year on year increase as more and more customers have come to appreciate the flexibility, safety and

Through the Trap (3T) and Advance Guardrail (AGR) towers in stock, alongside 260 pieces of powered access equipment. Utilisation of both is currently averaging around 50 percent. As a business, two of the things we rate highly about towers are their long life and low maintenance. Once purchased and then inspected regularly, our experience has been that they require little or no maintenance. On the very rare occasions when components have needed replacing, often after many years of service and literally hundreds of hires, we have been able to replace them quickly, easily and at modest cost. For return on investment towers are hard to beat."

"As a PASMA training centre we also enjoy the benefit of an additional income stream by delivering the association's industry-standard 'Towers for Users' course aimed at personnel who are responsible for assembling, dismantling, moving and inspecting



Directors David and Thomas Smith

C&a

PASMA focus

mobile towers. Training is now a crucial component of work at height and here at Smiths we offer it as part of a total package. The phrase 'one stop shop' has never had more importance or relevance than it does today."

"There are over 300,000 PASMA card carriers, working in a huge number of different sectors throughout the UK and Ireland. A recent and much welcome development has been PASMA's introduction of a Facebook facility which allows training centres like ours to post and publicise details of last minute deals. It's something we've already taken full advantage of and demonstrates how the

association is embracing social media as an effective communications tool on behalf of its members."

"Tower training currently accounts for almost 30 percent of our total training income which also includes safety harnesses, manual handling, abrasive wheels, ladders and stepladders, forklift trucks, booms, scissor lifts and trailer mounted access platforms through IPAF. From both a hire and training point of view, towers have a proven track record and will undoubtedly remain a mainstay of our business."

For more information about towers and tower training, visit www.pasma.co.uk

The original fleet of vehicles when the company first traded as a coal merchant and haulage operation



PASMA
www.pasma.co.uk

As a PASMA member, if you have an interesting or unusual story to tell about towers and tower training, please send it to michael.fern@pasma.co.uk