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# Letters

**To the editor Cranes&Access.**

Thank you for the detailed insight in your August/September editorial, into proposed activities being carried out by the Major Contractors Group. However, if you had substituted the initials IPAF in place of MCG, the circumstances that exist within the access industry are almost identical and your highlighting of a similar problem elsewhere, gives us the opportunity to air grievances which have been with us, and others, for a very long time.

From its fledgling days as IWPA, some 25 / 30 years ago, we can only congratulate IPAF with its continuing successful efforts to raise safety awareness in the Access Industry, but perhaps they should constantly be made aware that they, too, (to use your words) are not only a quango, but also a self appointed body purporting to speak "for the industry". They cause endless annoyance and frustration to other competent and long serving access companies, manufacturers and distributors within the industry. Companies who have no wish or requirement, mandatory or otherwise, to put up with IPAF's highly inflated opinion of itself.

LOLER / PUWER clearly state - "training should be carried out by a competent person ..." - to the satisfaction of the relevant employer or user... not only, or just by, IPAF. To the best of our knowledge, there are no, or have there ever been, requirements for the issuing of licences, a cornerstone of IPAF training. IPAF's ongoing relationship with the HSE must have taken a blow when Timothy Walker, HSE Director in 2003, as reported by the Safety Express from RoSPA said "... Passports are an industry initiative ... they are not required by HSE or by law ...." How many IPAF customers are aware that they are paying handsomely, for something totally unnecessary in the eyes of the law?

Many times, over many years, we have had to take issue with, and explain to, clients who are mistakenly under the impression that IPAF are the appointed and authorised body to whom all access training should be given and that any other training suppliers are apparently, and consequently, unsuitable. Apparently, IPAF are happy for this misapprehension to remain.

Many, many, longstanding access companies in the UK are capable of providing structured, competent and comprehensive training to access users, with personnel who have been in this industry for far more years, and have far more experience and ability, than either IPAF themselves and certainly most IPAF training companies. In our experience, industry, as distinct to the construction industry, don't know, and don't want to know, about IPAF and its activities.

IPAF encouraging a situation close to a Restriction of Trade, due to their association with CITB, and it's time they came clean with users and operators - even the Radio Times admits there are other TV listings available!!!! We are quite happy to accept change and advances within our industry, but would like to see HSE being the instigator, not IPAF.

There have been occasions when we have supplied specialist access equipment to users, as an authorised distributor, to be initially told that only IPAF can train. IPAF personnel have never been trained, authorised or recognised by this manufacturer, nor have they even visited the factory - so how can their training personnel then be classed as competent, and therefore how does this meet their own vaunted "exacting" standards?

At our own instigation, we have undergone detailed and expensive examination to receive accreditation from a recognised body, which confirms our ability to carry out authorised, recognised and competent training. This doesn't need, or involve, IPAF.

We cannot believe that our views are ours, and ours alone, and we would appreciate support from others, who are tired of this continual and increasing intrusion into, and unnecessary restriction of, their own businesses and clients.

Perhaps it is time for non associated IPAF access companies who provide a far more valuable and overall service to their clients, to form their own independent quango, enabling the HSE and clients to have a non biased view of their requirements?

On behalf of both:

**J.C. Wood**, Managing Director, Northern Platforms Ltd. Cheshire

**Barry Ireland**, Managing Director, Top Man Access and Handling, Kent.

**Dear Sir**

Following your article in May 2006 cranes & access issue re. the legalities of who can tow what, I've uncovered a whole new can of worms - tachographs!!!

It is difficult to get a hard & fast rule, even from the Dept of Transport (e.g. what is an exempt vehicle). The gist of it though would seem to be that if the MTM of vehicle & trailer (when towed for commercial purposes. e.g. not caravaners or weekend gymkhana eventers) exceed 7,500kg then the vehicle must be fitted with a tachograph. And remember it is the gross plated weights of vehicle & trailer that must not exceed 7.5 tonnes. My Kia Sorento commercial has a gross wt of 2600kg and can tow a braked trailer of up to 2800kg so, at the weekends I can tow a horsebox & 2 nags but, during the week I'm restricted to 900kg.

I suspect this will affect a great number of your readers and they probably know nothing about it.

Best Regards

**John Rodgers**

IMPAQ LTD



Dear Sir,

Reading Vertikal.net most days its very worrying to see how many people have been killed or sustained serious injury from not wearing a safety harness when using access equipment. As much as we have come a long way with IPAF and its safety standards, it shows there is still a lot more work to be done in ensuring that operators adhere to these safety factors.

Regards

**Peter Hird**

Managing Director

Peter Hird & Sons Ltd

### **Morning All,**

*Having just read the story on your web site I find it very strange that people find humour out of falls from height. You can only do so much to limit accidents when working at height, I feel that it should be compulsory for all operators to be trained. At times it will prove difficult, the user can fax or produce his/her licence, but an untrained person can still operate the machine....but by making it the law to have a licence to operate machines, this surely will cut down on accidents no matter how trivial they may be.*

*On the subject of harness's, it should be made compulsory that they are worn on booms and the relevant checks are carried out on sites to make sure people are wearing the right harness and a SAFE harness, what people need is education, we should never ever put a price on a life, go and get trained, remember "its an employers responsibility to ensure that their employee is trained to do the job at hand"....*

*With increased competition and a bit of research you can buy a harness for under £30.00, anyone can walk into a tool hire specialist and hire one these days, so why don't people ever wear one? I can only think of two reasons, 1) they can't be bothered and 2) They always think it won't happen to them....*

*Regarding the reporting of accidents on your website, on a whole you do a great job, the only thing I would say is that its important to get as much information as possible as rumours and Chinese whispers can do a company harm, there are always rumours in this industry and I think that you should be getting more quotes from the hire company's when accidents happen and then report what actually happened when it all comes out in the wash so to speak.*

*Have a good day and keep safe.*

*Kind Regards,*

**Craig Rooke**

GTAccess Ltd

Dear Sir,

RE TRAINING

It is possible that an article in the August/September edition of cranes and access gave a misleading impression.

There is no formal training scheme for tower crane erectors although a CSCS training scheme is in the process of being set up. Naturally Bennetts could therefore not use a training scheme which does not yet exist.

The evidence at the inquest confirmed the high level of knowledge and experience of Stephen Boatman and Gary Miles and that they had ample skills and experience to carry out the preparation work for the dismantle.

Bennetts stressed that the crew had carried out dismantles on many occasions successfully in the past and that the crew had sufficient knowledge, the correct tools and an appropriate method and risk statement and the manufacturers' manual to enable them to carry out the job correctly.

Unfortunately on this occasion the crew did not carry out the de-torquing in accordance with the manufacturers instruction manual with tragic consequences.

Bennetts stresses its commitment to training having recently had four staff pass the CSCS appointed persons exam and introduced the Spanset system for recovering men from height. All erection crew will attend the tower crane fitter course as soon as this is introduced but in the interim all are experienced tower crane fitters who have been trained through the traditional apprenticeship system of being shown how to carry out the work and gradually advancing to more complicated tasks which has been the training method used throughout the industry to date.

Bennetts has traded successfully as a tower crane hirer for 40 years prior to the accident without a fatality and is proud of its training and safety record.

**Edward Seager**

W D.Bennett

### **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.

