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CPA and IPAF work together

Two of the UK's leading industry associations are coming together to work on improving communications and understanding of the use of aerial work platforms on construction sites. The Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) and the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) are re-establishing the Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group sub-group which last met in 2010.

The move reflects a desire to strengthen the involvement of contractors in discussions about all aspects of aerial lift operational safety on site. This is topical, given the recent policy statement by UK Contractors Group, requiring defined levels of training for some classes of aerial lift operator. The work and objectives of IPAF's UK Safety Forum are being incorporated into the re-formed Strategic Forum sub-group on aerial lifts.

Secretariat services to the Strategic Forum's sub-groups are provided by the CPA which will also provide a chairman, while IPAF will fund the activities of the group and provide the services of its technical officer, Chris Wraith, to act as technical author for the group.

The initiative has received the full support of both Simon Mantle,

chairman of the Strategic Forum's Health & Safety Committee and Joy Jones from the HSE, who stressed the importance of providing continuity to the projects already launched by the IPAF Safety Forum. "We look forward to creating a truly inclusive group which will address all aspects of safe aerial lift operations and lead to the implementation of agreed best practices," said IPAF chief executive Tim Whiteman who currently chairs the IPAF Safety Forum. "Annual research by IPAF into the powered access industry shows that the UK is one of the world's most mature powered access rental markets. The UK aerial lift rental fleet size is estimated at close to 50,000 units and fleet expansion continued in 2012, rising an estimated four percent."

"Around 40 percent of aerial work



platform use is now non-construction, but our experience of working on the previous sub-group which produced anti-crushing guidance leads us to believe this group can be very inclusive and agree standards relevant to the whole sector."

The first meeting of the new group took place on 3rd September. Interested parties are invited to contact IPAF or the CPA for further information, although all of the members of the earlier group have been contacted, as well as other organisations and companies who have had an involvement in the subject since then.

The chairman of reconstituted group will be CPA director Kevin Minton, who led the earlier group between

2009 and 2010. There will be continuity with the work previously done by the Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group, which led to the publication of the Best Practice Guidance on avoiding trapping/crushing injuries to people in the platform. Minton said: "One of our underlying principles is about free exchange of information. We know that many organisations are considering steps they could take to manage risk better. These are good intentions, but we are not confident that all of the duty holders have good access to the best information about what steps to take. The best information could simply be reference to the existing guidance, or a better understanding of what other bodies are doing - including manufacturers."

"Also, when setting policies, there is a risk of bringing about unintended adverse consequences. Wider consultation can help avoid this. It also helps with adoption of the policy because third parties understand and empathise with the thinking that led to it."

Whiteman added: "The UKCG has shown a continuing desire to lead the industry to manage risks, and its recent policy requiring PAL+ or CPCS Competent Operator certification for net riggers and steel erectors is an example of this. But a lot of other work is being done by IPAF, HSE and others, and the reconstituted working group will be a good opportunity to promote better understanding of this."

