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Letters



This letter was received following our news report on a telescopic boom buckling while an All Terrain crane tried to remove a large tree that had fallen on the roof of a house in Redhill, Surrey in early January.

Dear Sir

As an operations manager of an established and reputable UK tree care company, I have specified, planned, organised and managed thousands of lifts of trees using cranes, all without incident. This is the first report of an incident of this kind in the UK that I am aware of and it concerns me.

For many years arborists have recognised the many benefits that the use of cranes bring to the controlled dismantling of trees. Quite simply, they make this operation much safer. However, the use of cranes brings its own complications and risks. As always the key to a successful and safe operation is thorough planning, training and competency (arborist and driver), built-in safety margins and an acceptance by all involved of their own limitations in the process. I am interested to find out the detail of this particular case and I agree with some previous comments that there seems to be more to this than meets the eye. We learn more by sharing information about the failures than we do the successes in most cases.

Arborists must be aware that siting a crane, putting a boom in the air and lifting trees is a serious responsibility and everything must be done to satisfy current HSE requirements and best practice to ensure everyone's safety. I often suggest to anyone considering using a crane for tree work to work backwards from this very scenario and to consider the conversation with the HSE inspector about their inputs into the planning of the job. I find this helps to focus the mind.

Cranes are used in UK arboriculture often. I know this because I have done the research and asked the industry. My work with cranes demonstrates that it can be done safely and can greatly increase the safety of our work and I am happy to share information about this with anyone with a serious interest. Guidance would be helpful to all parties and perhaps we are nearing the time when the two industries should start to discuss this at a formal level.

David Robinson

Written method statements

The following letter was written in response to Glenn Churchill's letter suggesting that legislation might be introduced for straight crane hire contracts to require a written method statement from the customer up front.

Dear Ed/Mark Darwin

Letters ref writing up lifting operations.

As a crane owner/manager I had a similar conversation with a partner company before Christmas last. I enclose my returned e-mail, perhaps you might like to ask British Standards as to the full explanation of the wording, "To be written, not to be written? The S.U standard actually states WRITTEN RISK ASSESSMENT so why not the method statement?"

Thanks for the C&A, has little to do with us at the bottom of the barrel, but still a good read and we dream on.

Kind Regards

John Monday

CSR Lifting Kent, UK

The email he refers to is:

Good day

Having been seriously disturbed by Laing o'my god medical revelations, I decided to read again BS 7121 2006 Part 1. To my dismay I find that in 6.2.2 part 2 it declares that "the results of the risk assessment should be recorded in writing and used in the preparation of the method statement for that site."

Now the wording "should be" is not a command as "will be" or "must be" but it could be against the basic understanding of "the spirit of the Statutory Instrument" i.e BS 7121.

So I think that this is to be taken as standard that All lifting operations should be written up before the act - ref: point 6 Planning of the lifting operation.

Where the "medically fit" for purpose comes into it well that can be divisive & discriminatory to the workers or employee.

Av a nice day

Best wishes

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The following letter was spurred on by a report we published in which two men were working on a bridge from a boom lift based on a barge in the river. The men were tied-off with harnesses and lanyards, even though they were working over water. The boom somehow slipped into the water dragging the two men under. One managed to detach his lanyard, while the other drowned. The other reference is to an article we carried in 2009 which refers to Stephen Lillicrap, a young man who, obeying a 100 percent tie-off rule attached his lanyard to a moving part on the back of a lattice crane and was then dragged into the works of the crane where he was fatally injured.

Feb 3rd 2014

Dear Sir,

The purpose of this letter is to remember a young man's tragic death some four years ago today.

I will say in the interest of full disclosure that I never knew Steven Lillicrap, or any other member of his family. I only learned of this young man's death through the daily news section dated February 4th 2009 on Vertikal.net that your site provides free of charge, to a worldwide group of readers.

As the popularity of your site continues to grow it is important for a reader to know that an incident on their job will most likely be reported upon. You can look at the material facts of his death as determined by OSHA in its report.

Fact: When Steven Lillicrap died, the crane industry was working under the OSHA 1926.550 which had been written some 40 years earlier.

Fact: TODAY, we as an industry working with cranes are required to comply and follow the specific directions of OSHA 1926.1400. See OSHA Letter of Interpretation 03/13/2012 - Certification and qualification requirements for mechanics, inspectors, and testers under the Cranes and Derricks in Construction standards.

Fact: Contractors are required by OSHA to train their employees, and there is a difference between someone telling them something and 'properly documented training'.

Fact: From OSHA's Letter of Interpretation you can check if your company - because it involves crane work - will fall under the requirements of The Regulations Crane and Derricks in Construction 1926.1400.

Fact: The laws and regulations of The General Industry or Steel Erection - Subpart R will not apply to a Crane assembly/disassembly process or activity. These activities are subject to 1926.1400.

Fact: OSHA 1926.1423 contains specific and noted exceptions to the widely enforced 100 percent tie-off rule that many companies enforce. The unique risks of crane assembly/disassembly and operation around the draw works and moving parts, along with pinch-points and other peculiar hazards, have special accommodations which are contained within this standard. Fall protection - 1926.1423.

Reading your article "Harness takes a life January 29th, 2014," on Vertikal.net it can be seen from this tragic and fatal incident how a worker can be in compliance with a standard, and then possibly by the rotation of some component become hopelessly entangled or ensnared without the hope of freeing themselves. Properly selected fall protection equipment along with aerial access equipment, continue to be necessary components to safe and proper crane assembly/disassembly operations.

I will not argue that properly selected and used fall protection prevents injuries and fatalities daily around the world. My first exposure to wearing a body harness was while assembling a Manitowoc 4100 Ringer inside a refinery southwest of Chicago. This refinery had safety people that oversaw your every move, much like they do today. Again this activity was done under 1926.550, the old crane standard. While our given task at the time was rewrapping the hoist drums we were required to be Tied-Off 100 percent by our host facility. We were exposed to this imminent danger 23 years ago by this requirement. Have we not learned anything in the 23 years since then?

While I did not agree, I was required/forced to comply. The nice thing was

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the crane operator was right alongside us on the other side of the cab window and he could see us and stop immediately if a danger arose. That was years ago and the cranes, and their complexities have continued to grow. The old crane standard went away in 2010.

In the crane industry all we seem to hear about is "Certified" or "Qualified". Whenever I bring up the fall protection accommodations for our very special industry, I continue to be met with a dismissive attitude by superintendents and safety people. Talking about safety has been my ongoing commitment. In May of 2012, I presented a session on "Complete Crane Communication," to draw attention to the connection between clear communication on the job site and safety.

A few months ago the general contractor had a vendor come in and do a presentation on fall protection. He really did a good presentation and passed on a lot of good information about today's available equipment for tie-off options. I listened to his presentation and then asked him a few direct questions. I explained to him that I was a certified crane operator and ask him if he knew about the special provisions about being tied off while working with cranes that is contained in OSHA 1926.1423? He answered "No". I asked him if he knew who Steven Lilicrap was? Again, he did not. I explained how Steven was killed and asked him if he could personally learn more about 1926.1423 His drop test of the dummy was very impressive, as well as the stickers that he passed out that said "I defy Gravity".

As we can see from the referenced sources above, a crane's presence on the job will hold your company accountable to OSHA 1926.1400. We cannot continue to allow the misinformation regarding 100 percent tie-off rules to possibly maim or kill another person.

Do your safety people have the correct information? It is 1926.1423 in Our Crane Industry. It is not General Industry. Have all of your people been trained and provided with the proper fall protection gear? I am talking about having a good and well informed trainer come in to personally spend some quality and unrushed time with your crane and rigging professionals. Document this training and provide your employees with their proof of this training as well, our industry should settle for nothing less.

In closing we cannot afford to stand by and watch as others are sacrificed on the altars of some misinformed superintendents and their safety people. A crane user does not subrogate their rights or responsibilities to a general contractor or host facility.

Don't think that you are on their coattails of accountability, in fact according to OSHA's Multi employer doctrine you are all in it together. See Summit OSHA's Multi-Employer Worksite Liability Doctrine Upheld Yet Again - General Contractors Continue To Be Held Liable Even If Their Own Employees Are Not Exposed To Hazard - Employment and HR - United States.

Let's all help each other to go home safely today.

Sincerely
John Egnatz

Stolen Genie Z-45

Dear Sir,

My name is Agriodimos Georgios, I would be really grateful if you could help me find a lift machine that was stolen from me on the 10th December from Katerini of Pieria in Greece, where I had it for rental. A reward will be offered to anyone who will deliver it to me.

Characteristics:

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Colour: Blue with a label AGRIODIMOS in Greek, Tel: 69369576500

Motor type: DEUTZ F3L1011F Engine serial number: 8159570

Thanking you in advance

Agriodimos Georgios

Agriodimos Tyrnavou - Larisas, Greece

Anyone who is offered this machine, or approached for spare parts can contact him directly or through us. His number is +30 69369576500.



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