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TYPE	BOOM
YEAR	2017
LIFTING	400KG
OUTREACH	8.94M
POWER	DIESEL
HEIGHT	16.25M



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Warning - tree sector at work!

Statistics show that the tree care industry is one of the most hazardous occupations. The combination of working at height, lifting and lowering widely varying loads, results in tree work accounting for one fifth of powered access related fatalities, a higher percentage of falls from heights and an alarmingly high rate of cranes overturns.

In an effort to reduce the number of incidents various government departments and trade associations around the world have implemented regulations and guidance aimed at mitigating some the risks and improving safety in an effort to reduce the number of incidents. It is worth repeating that the correct use of aerial work platforms and cranes is almost invariably the safest means of carrying out the work. It is essential though for operators to be fully trained and familiar with the equipment being used and the unique risks that trees present.

Every tree is different - even those of the same species - add in the wide range of complex tasks from crown reduction and thinning, to dead wooding, felling, inspection/surveying or chipping and waste removal and it is easy to understand why it can be so challenging.

The unpredictability of working with trees is also affected by age,

condition, position, type, size, density, wind and disease to name just a few of the variables. Each tree must be treated individually to ensure a safe outcome with substantial safety margins incorporated into any lift plan.

Underestimate the risks of lifting tree parts at your peril

When lifting tree sections the crane operator should know how to calculate the approximate weight of tree sections, and then ensure that those cutting the tree do not get greedy and cut off larger sections than the crane can handle. On top of this it is wise to de-rate the crane by up to 50 percent in order to build in a healthy margin of additional safety - once the tree section is cut free it is too late to discover that it is heavier than anticipated.

Despite the dangers, climbing is still the most prevalent work at height solution for tree work. Aerial lifts have become more popular but their upfront cost has limited their uptake



One of the most popular platforms among arborists is the tracked spider lift



c&a

arborists

Despite the dangers, climbing is still the most prevalent work at height solution for tree work



A crane operator should know how to calculate the approximate weight of tree sections - getting it wrong can have serious consequences.

to the trickier work such as trees that are diseased or deemed unsafe to climb. In these cases getting close to the tree is the first factor to consider - is it in a garden, near a road or in the middle of a wood or field. Is it near power lines and what is ground like on the route in and around the tree.

Which platform to use?

Most importantly the platform chosen must have enough working height and outreach so that it doesn't have to set-up directly under branches being removed. A larger machine may also speed up the work as it will not need to be repositioned as often and the risk of damage is reduced. One of the most popular platforms among arborists is the tracked spider lift. Smaller models - up to 20 metres - are the

favourite. They can be towed behind a 4x4, cross soft and uneven ground and pass through tight restrictions such as garden gates. Their narrow width and high centre of gravity does however make loading/unloading and travelling on uneven ground a hazardous activity if care is not taken.

There is also a trend towards larger machines - up to 30 metres or more. At the same time platforms mounted on 4x4 pick-ups are also becoming more popular. While they can cope with some off-road conditions, the working heights they offer of 13 to 14 metres is too limited for most heavier tree work. When it comes to tree trimming alongside the road however, these units - as well as van mounted platforms and larger truck mounts - are ideal.

Basic safety

Basic safety includes always having a minimum of two people present when working at height, with one of the ground team trained to use the platform emergency descent or make an aerial rescue if necessary. Chainsaws - dangerous even when used on the ground - need extra care and experience when working with them at height. This includes the usual PPE equipment, plus extras such as leg protectors and a mesh screen between the chain saw operation and anyone else in the platform.

Operated equipment only



Based in Worcester, UK, Fletcher Access is a small family owned specialist access rental company, supplying operated equipment to the tree and industrial maintenance sectors. Run by two brothers the company runs three spider lifts - a 42 metre Omme 4200 RBJD, and 27 metre Omme 2750 both hybrid powered, and a 19 metre Hinowa 19.65, along with an 18 metre GSR 179 TJV truck mount and an Upright scissor lift.

The company takes responsibility for everything regarding the equipment - delivery, setting up, operating and removal from site - allowing the arborists to concentrate on their job.

"When arborists hire a platform it can arrive late and may be one they are not fully familiar with, and so takes time to set-up and operate," says Simon Fletcher. "Using a company like ours means they can concentrate on the tree work, while we do the rest. Productivity is much higher to the point where the crew clearing the ground below struggle to keep pace with the guy working in the basket."

"We tend to work mostly on trees they are unable to climb because they are windblown, diseased or deemed unsafe to climb by the local authority. Climbing is still prevalent among arborists and I would say they only use platforms on 15 to 20 percent of their work, primarily

because of the additional cost. However, the attitude is changing, as they realise that you can often complete more work - especially when the operator is familiar with the equipment."

"Everything is price driven, for example, a few weeks ago I quoted £700 to fell three trees using one of our spider lifts but mentioned to the client that the trees could easily be climbed which could work out cheaper. I recommended an arborist who quoted about half the price."

"On trees that cannot be climbed the tree guys like working with a skilled operator. It may be more expensive but the work flows more quickly. For working heights up to 20 metres we use the remote or ground controls, however above this we have the operator in the basket. Two people in the basket can get a bit cramped particularly when one is using a chain saw."

"In this case both the operator and the arborist have to wear the correct PPE - including face visor, gloves and ear protectors etc - and the additional protection when using a chain saw. There also has to be a cage screen divide between them. All this can add up to quite a weight in the basket. Fortunately, the Omme 2750 has 250kg capacity and the new 4200 has 230kg. Platforms with only 200kg capacity can be difficult particularly with a larger arborist."



The 27.5 metre Omme 2750 RXBDJ

Fletcher Access tends to use its 19 metre Hinowa for smaller trees and hedge trimming. "We may add another spider lift next year and are looking at the Hinowa 20.10 Lithium - a technology that I think will take over. As well as being more environmentally friendly and better for indoor work, the main advantage of a battery powered lift is noise - or lack of it - which has several key advantages. Communication between the ground workers and the person in the basket is very important and being able to have a normal conversation between the two makes working more efficient and much safer. From a commercial point of view, the platform is able to start working earlier - perhaps from 6.30am - particularly if a lithium battery powered chain saw is also used."

"I do keep abreast of the latest equipment developments and read Vertikal.net and Cranes & Access for the latest news, and think that the new track mounted loader cranes from Jekko and BG Lift will be popular, particularly if they have attachments such as grabs and tree shears etc. The only problem I see is their weight - the Jekko JF545 is almost 17 tonnes - which means transporting could be a problem - the Omme 4200 weighs seven tonnes."

"The new tracked Böcker RK36/2400 also looks interesting

being able to lift 2,400kg and be used with a platform, however the ground clearance looked low which may cause a problem loading and unloading?"

"Transporting equipment - particularly to remote areas - is an issue that clients do not fully appreciate and can end up being half the cost. Last week we could not get the low loader near the site because of the narrow country lanes and had to track the Omme two miles! We have become transport specialists getting equipment over and around obstacles without causing damage."

"There is a market for operated specialist equipment which takes the hassle away from the arborist, allowing them to work faster and safer."



The 42 metre Omme 4200 RBJD

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