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Large truck mounts ready and able

The Grenfell Tower fire in London in June took 71 lives, 21 of those who died were trapped on the top floor of the 24 storey apartment block. Shocking as the tragedy was, perhaps even more disgraceful was London Fire Brigade's total lack of suitable equipment that might have rescued those on the upper floors. The inability of the fire department to muster large truck mounted platforms in a city of high rise blocks was particularly scandalous to anyone involved with powered access, knowing that there were a number of big truck mounted platforms in the area. This resulted in numerous letters and offers of help and advice for the London Fire Brigade and the Mayor of London from companies, individuals and IPAF.

London Fire Brigade does not even have a platform as high as 40 metres, totally inadequate to deal with a fire in any block of more than 10 floors. However it is estimated that about eight percent of London residents live in 700 tower blocks of 11 or more

storeys. Given the Grenfell Tower problems with inflammable cladding, and the lack of any means of rescuing people from the upper floors of these tower blocks it is clear that the capital has a serious problem.

Unfortunately this problem has already been highlighted several times before following similar but less serious fires. While the solution is easy - purchase larger rescue platforms - obtaining the required funding appears to be an ongoing problem. However shortly after the incident the chief fire officer suggested that the technology allowing such big platforms to travel in London has only just become available, something that we all know to be profoundly untrue. The issue will probably be tied up in political wrangling for several years - even after the inquest results.

Suitable equipment is not the problem. There are numerous

companies around the world that specialise in large truck mounted platforms - both for firefighting and for construction/industrial use. Bronto Skylift for example has platforms for many different sectors topped by its 112 metre F 112 HLA fire rescue platform - good for about 34 storeys.

The growth in the number of larger truck mounted platforms in rental fleets over the past 10 years means there are significant numbers in and around Greater London with working heights from 50 to 90 metres - well in excess of the London Fire Brigade equipment.

A letter from IPAF president Tim Whiteman to the London Mayor



The Grenfell Tower fire in London in June took 71 lives, 21 of those who died were trapped on the top floor of the 24 storey apartment block



Angloco firefighting platforms in Lincoln



The trailer-mounted Ruthmann TTS1000 has an outreach of 40 metres at a height of 60 metres



Sadiq Khan asked the question whether access rental companies might be able to help by using their larger commercially orientated platforms in emergency situations. Obviously they are not fire specific platforms and lack some of the rescue specific features, but they may have a useful role in responding to future emergencies involving high rise buildings.

Even this simple request for a meeting to discuss the situation has been passed onto the Fire Brigade and a follow up letter to Roy Wilshire, the chief of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), has been acknowledged but no date has yet been set.

"IPAF's members are keen to investigate whether there could be any way they can assist the Fire Brigades with large booms in an emergency and are hoping for a meeting," said Whiteman.

We also contacted the London Fire Brigade, asking a simple question regarding plans/progress with sourcing larger rescue platforms. We were given the legal excuse/

brush off/no comment - which suggests that nothing has been done, meaning that the city goes into 2018 in the same position as it was when it failed to rescue people in Grenfell Tower.

Demand continues

The likely demand for large truck mounted platforms to assist fire departments augments the continued increase in their use for industrial and commercial applications, such as wind turbine maintenance, TV and film industry work, construction, building cleaning, maintenance and inspection - all of which are creating increased demand which the major European manufacturers - Palfinger, Bronto and Ruthmann - are struggling to satisfy.

Of the three, Ruthmann was the only one to limit its largest truck mount to 75 metres. However, earlier this year it announced a change in its policy in this area saying: "given the current situation and delivery times for 90 metre truck mounted lifts we sense sufficient demand for a third



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Work assembling the first Ruthman T 900 HF



The multi-sided boom of the new T 900 HF

producer to enter the market". The company has set itself the challenge to have the new 90 metre working height Sky Performance Steiger T 900 HF platform ready for a world debut at Intermat in Paris this April. Why the change in policy? With Bronto under new ownership and arch rival Palfinger the only other competitor, Ruthmann sees a chance to muscle in and take



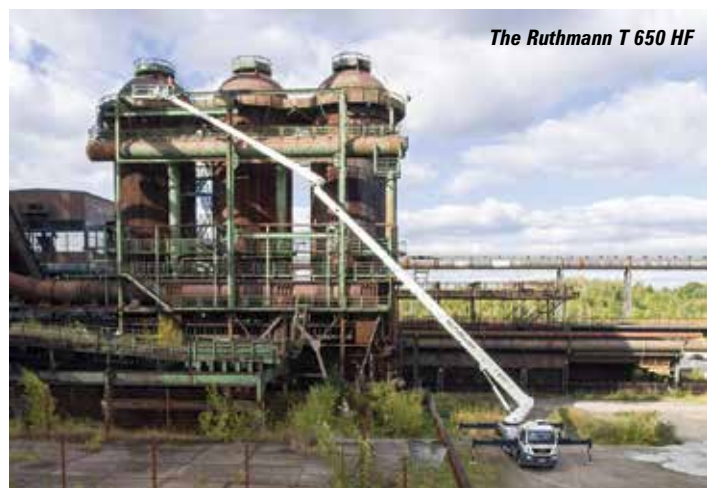
One of the Ruthmann TTS1000's working in the USA

market share as well as benefit from an expanding market. However, this is not the first time that the company has produced machines above 75 metres. In 2001 it launched the trailer mounted 101 metre TTS1000. It ploughed all of its engineering resources into the project but only ever sold two units. It almost bankrupted the company and was eventually removed from the product line. With hindsight, it was a case of the wrong product at the wrong time although both units are much appreciated, particularly for their outreach - 40 metres at a height of 60 metres - and are still working in the USA.

When Ruthmann announced the new product, it was coy over the exact working height dubbing it the T-9XXHF. It has now said that rather than squeezing the last drop of working height out of the machine, it has listened to customers and is concentrating on maximising platform stability rather than adding an extra metre or two.

The 'dual concept' machine is hoped to be more versatile. The design - which includes a multi-sided boom - will allow the 30 metre upper boom or jib to work with the main/lower boom at an elevation as low as 72 degrees - rather than being required to be locked into its maximum elevation first. In this way Ruthmann expects to achieve an outreach of at least 39 metres. The lower boom will however need to be electronically locked into the vertical position before the platform can reach anything like maximum height.

The new lift is likely to be mounted on a standard commercial chassis from Scania, MAN or Volvo, with a total weight of between 48 and 52 tonnes and an overall length of less than 15 metres. According to Ruthmann the T 900 HF will be "the world's most mobile large truck mounted platform and will further strengthen and expand current market position in the large platform market segment nationally and internationally."



The Ruthmann T 650 HF

The HF - High Flex - designation suggests that it will follow the specification and design configuration of its recent HF models, currently topped by the 75 metre T 750 HF, which includes a long upper boom/jib and extreme platform rotation, complete with a short articulated end jib.

Features include the basket stowed in the middle of the chassis rather than hanging over the rear, reducing the risk of damage while travelling and manoeuvring on site and keeping front boom overhang under two metres. Ruthmann also confirmed three launch orders from rental companies Felbermayr and Hüffermann in Germany and Joly Location in France.

Ruthmann's largest truck mounted lift until the new launch is the 75 metre T 750 HF which with the 65 metre T 650 HF went into production at the end of 2016. The four axle T 750 HF has a five section main boom, topped by a long three section jib/top boom and short articulated end jib. Maximum platform capacity is 600kg which it can take to a height of around 70 metres although capacity at full height is 320kg. Maximum outreach is 41 metres, but this is only available at specific points such

as over the rear outriggers and with a restricted capacity of 100kg. The machine also has an impressive 14 metres below ground reach thanks to its three section jib.

Platform rotation is a full 440 degrees, allowing the front of the platform - which has extended platform dimensions of 3.82 metres by 970mm - to face back towards the machine, handy when working over buildings. Overall vehicle length is just under 14 metres, depending on the chassis, while total weight is 32 tonnes.

The T 650 HF has the same boom and jib configuration as the T 750 HF but provides up to 43 metres of outreach with 100kg platform capacity, while the 600kg maximum platform capacity is available up to a working height of around 60 metres. The T 650 uses the same platform and 440 degree rotation system as the T 750 although more compact with an overall length of just under 12 metres.

Competition

As mentioned earlier, Bronto Skylift is now under new ownership following its acquisition by Japanese fire and rescue equipment manufacturer Morita Holdings at the end of 2015. Morita is Japan's



A Bronto S56XR purchased by Swiss rental company Maltech

leading producer of firefighting equipment - fire engines, airport fire tenders and rescue ladders/ platforms - as well as producing a range of recycling equipment and garbage/refuse collection trucks. Morita primarily acquired Bronto to give it an international firefighting platform product line and access to a wider international market. This may be beneficial given the Grenfell Tower disaster. The acquisition will also provide it with a full line of dedicated rescue platforms to complement its ladder platform range that is topped with a 56 metre model. The company has also spent the past two years learning about the commercial, or industrial market for truck mounted platforms

and looks set to use its impressive resources to expand its presence and possibly the product line. The other major player in this market, Palfinger, has also been busy upgrading its largest platform - the 103 metre WT 1000 - to the P 1000 mounted on an updated five axle Tadano Faun All Terrain crane carrier. The platform was originally developed with an eye on the growing wind turbine cleaning and maintenance market, as well the growing demand for work on tall buildings. With an outreach of 35 metres the P1000 has maximum working height of 102.5 metres with 200kg platform capacity, while the maximum is 600kg. The new platform also includes

the features from the company's latest NX series, which includes the innovative X-jib with up to 240 degrees of articulation and 400 degrees of platform rotation. The overall width with outriggers deployed is now 600mm smaller but still retains the same performance. Two new assistance systems are used for the first time with the P 1000. The ADAS Hands Free System (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems) means that operators no longer have to constantly hold the joystick when moving the platform allowing them to perform other activities at the same time. The ADAS Collision Protection function prevents damage by means of anti-collision sensors which use car reversing and driverless car technology, to provide a warning and cut out before any collision. The driver's sleeper cab has also been given a complete update and overhaul.

Other market developments

The market has seen a number of interesting developments in the past year. A few months ago Danish crane and access rental company



BMS has opened a big truck mounted platform branch in the UK

BMS officially opened the UK branch of its big truck mounted platform rental operation with Tom Wilson as sales director. Wilson - the founder of Wilson Access Hire in 2002 - sold the business to AFI in 2013. BMS UK will offer very high specification truck mounted platforms from 55

Palfinger upgraded the 103 metre WT 1000 to the P 1000 on a new Tadano Faun All Terrain carrier



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AA Access fleet includes units from 10 to 70 metres



to 103 metres, along with its latest innovation of high wind speed machines, designed to work safely in winds of up to 20.8 metres a second. BMS runs a fleet of 38 large truck mounted platforms and covers most of Northern Europe including Germany and the Benelux region. Ib Steffensen, director of BMS said: "We are already seeing results that demonstrate the UK access market is ready to welcome the high specification equipment that BMS offers and enjoying the benefits we bring. With Tom's background and his reputation for delivering quality and service we are the perfect fit."

AA Access acquired

Staying in the UK, large truck mounted platform rental company AA Access has been acquired by UK cleaning and industrial maintenance company High Access. AA Access founder/owner Andy Ainsworth and his team will remain with the business, with Niel and Adam Bethell of High Access joining the company as directors.

High Access was established by chief executive Niel Bethell in 2005, to provide a maintenance and cleaning service to the commercial, industrial and high end and high level residential property sectors. The company said: "This acquisition will allow our clients to reap the benefits of the business now having

an enhanced fleet of fully owned, top of the range machinery, and will support the company's objective of moving into new sectors while delivering growth through high service levels."

Andy Ainsworth established AA Access in 2003 with the aim of providing a superior rental service for high end truck mounted aerial lifts. Its fleet includes units from 10 metres through to the 70 metre Bronto 70 XDT. A large proportion of its work comes from supplying platforms to the film and television industry.

Bethell added: "We are focused on further expanding the business, particularly in Birmingham, Leeds, Scotland and London, and the AA Access acquisition was part of this long-term strategy. High Access was built on strong customer relationships and standing out in the sector for quality."

Kulawik joins Kiloutou

Another interesting development in 2017 was the move of truck mounted platform specialist Stephan Kulawik to French rental group Kiloutou. He joined the company as chief executive of Kiloutou Germany, following just over two years with Danish rental company BMS where he was sales director of its truck mounted platform division, with the brief to build up its large

A Ruthmann T 570 HF



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Sogage has an eight model line-up topped by the 74.2 metre forSte TJJ75

truck mounted rental operations in Germany and the UK. That move came after more than 25 years with Wumag/Palfinger Platforms - the last three years as managing director.

The appointment comes shortly after Oliver Kark stepped aside as chief executive of Kiloutou's lead subsidiary in Germany - Starlift.

Italian influence

The market for 75 metre plus machines has always been the exclusive domain of the German and Finnish manufacturers. The Italian manufacturers that dominate the 3.5 tonne truck market - CTE, Multitel, GSR, Comet, Sogage etc - have wisely chosen to focus on the smaller, higher volume end of the market. Multitel and Sogage do however produce 75 metre truck mounts. The 75.1 metre Multitel MJ 750 has been produced for some time and Sogage has an eight model line-up topped by the 74.2 metre forSte TJJ75 launched in 2015.

Mounted on a 32 tonne four axle truck, the TJJ75 has a five section main boom, four section main jib and a second short articulating jib. Outreach is said to be 40 metres and maximum platform capacity 600kg - with up to 360 degrees of rotation. A 900kg winch option is also available. CTE and Oil & Steel offer machines in the 60/65 metre range.

The problem with platforms above 75 tonnes is that they require a whole different approach to make it practical for the road, resulting in very high development costs for what is a very low unit volume and a market that tends to be highly conservative and unwilling to invest such large sums in a manufacturer with no experience in this sector. Don't expect that to change any time soon.

TIME Manufacturing in the USA also has several truck mounted ranges - Condor, Phoenix and Skybird - but maximum working height is 65.5 metres with 28 metres outreach and 600kg maximum capacity. The company is also the US distributor for Ruthmann offering the 72 metre T235A for the North American market.

And the Chinese? XCMG has recently unveiled a range of 11 firefighting rescue platforms from 22 metres to the range-topping 100 metre DG100 which has been available for several years. It also plans to expand into overseas markets saying that its products have already been exported to more than 30 countries including Russia, Indonesia, Uganda, Nigeria.

Future developments?

One of the major applications for the largest truck mounted platforms is wind turbine service and maintenance. With turbines being designed with higher hub heights and longer blades there is growing pressure on the truck mounted lift manufacturers to produce units with greater working heights, in excess of the 112 metres currently available. There is talk of

Multitel MJ750



A Ruthmann T235A purchased by Blade Platforms



140 to 150 metre platforms being developed - possibly for a Bauma 2019 unveiling? How this might be achieved within a roadable package is anyone's guess, particularly if the chassis is to be kept to a size that can be moved at short notice without substantial restrictions. Ruthmann's 17 year old TTS1000 concept which used a three axle

tractor towing a six axle trailer might just have come of age? Another alternative might be along the lines of a large All Terrain crane adding additional ballast before working or heaven forbid with removable booms? To achieve these huge increases in working height however requires a complete design rethink. Interesting times ahead.

Ruthmann T 510 HF



The range-topping 100 metre XCMG DG100

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