



What the General Product Safety Regulations mean for the access industry

The new General Product Safety Regulations, the UK implementation of the General Product Safety Directive 2001/95/EC, came into force on 1 October 2005. While the regulations are aimed at consumer products rather than those used in the workplace, they also cover products that are designed for professional use but "migrate" to the consumer market. Consumer products generally require a higher safety standard than products supplied to professionals. The powered access industry has a small but significant amount of equipment that is offered for hire to consumers through high street rental outlets. Manufacturers of professional products such as MEWPs may therefore need to carry out additional risk assessments and implement additional control measures if their products are likely to migrate to the consumer market.

Under the new regulations, producers and distributors are obliged to supply products that are safe, and ensure that a product remains safe throughout its reasonably foreseeable period of use. This means that producers and distributors have to consider the

particular hazards and risks associated with use by a consumer rather than by an experienced professional user. Additional markings and instructions on a MEWP may be needed.

Producers and distributors are obliged to inform the enforcing authorities when a product in the market is potentially dangerous and of the action being taken to prevent further risks to consumers. They must initiate a product recall if other measures are insufficient to protect consumers. Distributors also have an obligation to monitor safety of products and are required to maintain detailed traceability information for all products they supply or fit. Producers are obliged to take steps to examine the risks products might pose. This includes regular testing and auditing of product safety and maintaining a register of customer complaints.

In light of the regulations, the IPAF Manufacturers' Technical Committee has formed a working group to formulate procedures for manufacturer members in the issuing of product alerts. IPAF has also started a tool for information sharing at www.ipaf.org/alerts.htm, where users can view available product advisories.

Inadvertent operation of controls: IPAF works with the HSE on machine safety

IPAF and its manufacturer members are working with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to examine how powered access equipment and their use can be made even safer. The HSE issued a warning to the construction industry in early October on the potential dangers of two types of equipment—mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) and telehandlers. The HSE pointed out two specific risks that have led to accidents. The first is the danger of the operator falling onto and inadvertently activating controls on a MEWP, and eventually being trapped or crushed against an overhead or adjacent structure. The second is the danger of reversing a telehandler, with limited driver visibility, and hitting persons on site.

At the same time, the HSE stressed that CE-marked machines are legitimate and that users should always contact the manufacturer before considering any physical modifications to machines. Most modern equipment already features "deadman" systems that prevent inadvertent use.

IPAF supports the HSE's plan to provide more details of the accidents and the use situations. IPAF also welcomes the HSE's emphasis on the need to train operators and site managers, including the operation of controls and emergency lowering from the ground. The issue of controls designed to prevent inadvertent operation is being further discussed as part of the review of EN 280, in which IPAF is actively participating.

First aid course

Find yourself having to take charge of first aid equipment during an emergency without a qualified first aider on site? Several IPAF-approved training centres now offer the Appointed Persons' First Aid (APFA) course, which aims to provide participants with sufficient knowledge and confidence to deal with an accident until a qualified first aider or the emergency services take charge of the situation.

It is a one-day, non-assessed course that provides basic first aid training. This follows the HSE's recommendation in the Approved Code of Practice and Guidance L74, First aid at work, as the minimum level of training for persons in low-risk workplace environments. On completion of the training, participants should have knowledge and understanding of first aid principles, action to be taken in the event of an emergency, basic life support, typical major injuries and how to deal with them. The APFA course is currently available at: HSS Hire Service, Instant Training, Kingfisher Access Services, and Shropshire County Training.

Read all about it in the Powered Access Review

The IPAF annual journal, the Powered Access Review, is out this month, with features on the Work at

Height Regulations and industry trends, plus a full training centre directory. Free copies can be obtained from the Milnthorpe office.



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BOOK THIS DATE: The next IPAF AGM and Access Summit will be held on 4 April 2006 at Whittlebury Hall near Milton Keynes.