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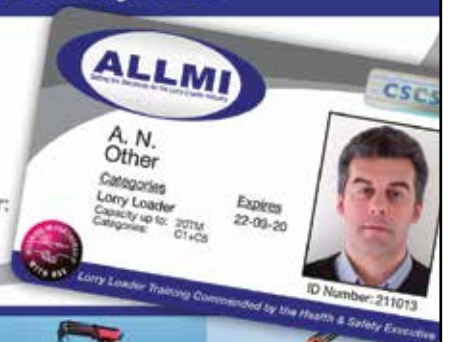
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CPA research highlights pending operator shortages

The UK's Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) has completed a major research project into the supply and demand of equipment operators in the construction industry. The study covered CPA members as well as training providers and contractors. A key purpose of the report was to gain clarity regarding the number of operators working in UK construction and to challenge the published figure of around 40,000 as detailed in the Construction Industry Training Board's Construction Skills Network Forecast. The CPA study indicates a total of around 289,000.



Kevin Minton

Kevin Minton, director of the CPA said: "Construction equipment is on the critical path of all infrastructure and building projects and skilled and competent operators are required if projects are to be delivered safely, on budget and on target. Equipment owners, operators and contractors therefore need to forecast and manage labour supply, including recruitment and retention of the existing workforce over the next five to 10 years. The findings from the CPA study mean that the numerical importance of operators as an occupational group matches their importance on site. Instead of being low in the rankings of occupation by volume, we now have the evidence to show that equipment operation as an occupation is one of the top five in construction."

"The research suggests that one reason for this discrepancy is the reliance on standard classification codes for company activity and occupations. These do not necessarily match the

real world, and many employers do not fully understand them. The underreporting remained unquestioned until we questioned it. It would be a big task - outside our control - to correct this, but we suggest that the Construction Skills Network report explains the nature and significance of the published figures. Given the potential scale of the underreporting, this is essential for policy and planning purposes."

58% of respondents struggle to recruit

40 percent of respondents stated that recruitment is very difficult or fairly difficult. While 28 percent had struggled with hard to fill vacancies in the past year. The areas with largest recruitment needs over the next 12 months are earthmoving - 26 percent, cranes and lifting - 19 percent, and materials handling at five percent. Skills and knowledge of potential candidates is said to be the biggest barrier to recruitment. Three key barriers in relation to training were found to be the cost,



the time off the job required to undertake training and the quality of training available.

Analysis of construction equipment qualifications indicated that there are currently 65 relevant NVQ qualifications applicable to operators, ranging from NVQ Level 2 through to NVQ Level 5, covering all aspects of equipment. However, the survey found that the level of apprenticeship training in the sector is low, potentially reducing its attractiveness as a career option compared to other construction occupations with more well established apprenticeship programmes. Over 80 percent of respondents stated they currently did not employ any apprentices at all.

80 percent of respondents have no apprentices!

The report findings suggested that there are fewer young people in the construction equipment sector than in the economy as a whole, with 43 percent of construction equipment workers aged 45 and only over and eight percent aged 24 or under.

Respondents said that the biggest challenges facing the construction equipment sector over the next five years, is

the recruitment of young people into the industry to replace an ageing workforce, with concerns regarding the attractiveness of the industry to young people. Other challenges included the increasingly competitive environment, lack of skills on site, Brexit and budget cuts.

Minton added: "This research is a valuable guide for us to work with our members to identify the areas of importance and priority. One of the key findings of this survey is the difficulty of recruiting skilled and qualified operators and the CPA is undertaking a number of initiatives to address this, such as a plant skills strategy forum and a careers event."



Recruiting young people to the industry is a major challenge

Stars of the Future 2018



Preparations are well underway for the CPA Stars of the Future 2018 event to recognise the future stars of the equipment industry. Over 700 mechanic apprentices nationwide are eligible to enter the awards which will be held this year at the Heart of England Conference and Events Centre in Fillongley near Coventry on Thursday 14th June. The awards are for mechanic apprentices who have been assessed throughout the academic year, on their work in college and in the work environment, and the enthusiasm and commitment they bring to learning. There are separate awards for Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices, at both regional and national level.



Stars of the Future national and regional winners 2017