



# Saving lives by stopping falls

The No Falls Foundation is the first and only UK-based charity devoted exclusively to the work at height sector. The Foundation is dedicated to preventing falls from height and helping people affected by the life-changing consequences of a fall.

Every year literally hundreds of thousands of people work at height in a variety of industry sectors. Some are more obvious than others, such as construction, roofing and facilities management, but there are also countless others who work at height on a day-to-day basis - often without realising it - in shops, offices, factories and hospitals. The list is almost endless.

What they all have in common is risk. The risk of a fall that might kill them or leave them with serious life-changing injuries with potentially devastating consequences for their families, friends and work colleagues. Figures published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) show that in 2018/19, 40 people were killed in the workplace as the result of a fall from height.

The No Falls Foundation, in partnership with stakeholders such as the Access Industry Forum (AIF), other trade associations and professional bodies committed to advancing health and safety, has three distinct objectives.

## 1. Education:

- Delivering a continuous programme of education highlighting the risks associated with working at height and the need for proper risk assessment, informed equipment selection and professional training;
- Participating in conferences, workshops and seminars and contributing articles to trade and professional journals;
- By raising funds, organising appeals and promoting campaigns designed to raise awareness of the life-changing injuries that can be sustained following a fall from height and objects falling from height.

## 2. Research:

Research and the exchange and sharing of knowledge and information are a vital part of the Foundation's work. The Foundation collaborates with a wide range of organisations with the aim of keeping people safe when working at height.

## 3. Support:

The Foundation provides information and guidance, support and relief to those in need by reason of ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage following a fall from height or injuries sustained from objects falling from height.

For more information visit [nofallsfoundation.org](http://nofallsfoundation.org)

## No Falls Foundation CHARITY BALL

SATURDAY  
9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

COOMBE ABBEY  
HOTEL

BRINKLOW ROAD, BINLEY,  
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Bring your family, friends, colleagues and customers along for a fabulous evening of great food, fun and entertainment in support of this important new charity dedicated exclusively to the work at height sector.

To book tickets, visit  
[nofallsfoundation.org](http://nofallsfoundation.org)  
or email [trustees@nofallsfoundation.org](mailto:trustees@nofallsfoundation.org)

# Letters



## Dear Mark,

I always read your Editorials and appreciate your wisdom. Your team does an excellent job of presenting industry situations far and wide. Your field staff must run very busy agendas.

Perhaps you have noticed the reader responses to News reports since the web site was revised. Correct me if I am wrong but I think the reports are drawing much better reader response than the former web site.

Please consider writing a yearly series about recruiting techniques useful for attracting new workers in our industry. I am an independent small business in tree service and pressure washing with one helper, and a second helper on standby. I have trained 37 groundsman or banksman in 27 years in business. I guess I have been lucky, treat my workers with respect and I don't ask a person to do something I would or could not do.

Sincerely,

**Sherman "Sherm" Anderson**  
**Best Tree Service**  
**Mountain View, Arkansas USA**

## Good Afternoon Mr Editor,

Thank you to all the staff at The Institution of Mechanical Engineers for holding yet another very good Crane Safety Conference in London this month with lots of excellent speakers during the day.

As confirmation of my answers to the audience during the midday Question & Answer session:

1. In the UK the Employer is the Duty Holder (Not the Employee) under The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
2. The Major Contractor on site is responsible for the Safety of all persons irrespective of their status as Employees, Subbies or Visitors. As detailed in The Occupiers Liability Act 1957.
3. My 12 years of Research into 632 Lifting Incidents Worldwide which led to 559 fatalities confirms: Mobile Cranes were involved in 37 percent of them, with Crawler and Tower Cranes at 15 percent each, while Improvised Lifting Ops were the worst record due to many being undertaken without RAMS or Pre-planning by the AP.

Therefore with the Courts now imposing multimillion pound fines for non-compliance by Employers the next development may well be jail sentences for managers under Section 36 and or directors under Section 37. With prosecution barristers possibly seeking application of Section 40 thus reversing the evidential burden onto defendants to prove compliance with HSW Act.

The chief executive and managing director should now be energised by the need to proactively manage safety as 632 Lifting Incidents worldwide causing 559 Fatalities - 559 is too many with yet another two last week in Redcar.

Kind Regards

**Mike Ponsonby**

## Dear editor

I see you are covering outrigger pads in the next issue, so you might be able to answer something I just do not comprehend. It is the crass ignorance that some crane operators display when it comes to basic physics and understanding of what affects stability of the machine under their control. How is it possible that people like this are set free with such a big and dangerous piece of equipment? Even if they have not had formal instruction, anyone who is sufficiently skilled to be let anywhere near a crane cannot help but quickly acquire a 'feel' for the machine under their control. We all do this with our cars soon gaining an intimate knowledge of what it will do and not do and understanding its limits. Why do those planning or rigging up for a job persist in using spreader plates that anyone can see are inadequate for the ground or even not bothering at all.

And what are the crane owners thinking? Given how expensive a crane is, whether new or second hand, the total cost of such an inexcusable mistake is massive and one that no one in their right mind would risk. Why do they ignore the basics of lift science, the protection of property, the rule of gravity and the need to keep the crane in service?

Those in the industry must ask why we are having so many incidents? Our industry needs a rude awakening, a cool change and a drive to get back to basics!

**Gerr Simpson**

*It is hard not to agree with everything Mr Simpson says, there is still an apparent ignorance among some operators. It is true that there is a dire shortage of operators and all too often companies send out operators who either do not have the experience - very different from the training - to carry out a specific job or are simply unfamiliar with the machine yet feel that they have to press ahead regardless. Contractors do not help with this and surely some of it comes back to the constant pressure on rental rates that leaves little room to take several years to fully train an operator and have enough on board to cover sickness and other unplanned absences or allow operators to work sensible hours. I recall many years ago a presentation introducing an early crane simulator. The presenter pointed out that the simulator could not replace real hands on training and experience of working with a highly skilled operator over a decent period of time. However he went on to say, "what the simulator will do is weed out job applicants who should never be let anywhere near a real crane as they simply lack the basic aptitude".*

*It seems that too often some of these people not only make it onto a real crane, but they are given control of it! This would never happen with a commercial aircraft, and probably not a bus or a truck in many jurisdictions - so why a large crane?*



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## Stan Thompson 1929 - 2019

**Stan Thompson - a senior UK crane hire figure from the 1970s and 80s when he worked with BET, JD White and Hewden Stuart - passed away on Thursday September 19th. He would have been 90 at the end of September.**

Born in Sunderland, North East England, he attended Ryhope Grammar School and started his career as an articled accountant with Peat Marwick Mitchell - now KPMG. During his time with the company he became the auditor for Middlesbrough-based bridge builder and steel fabricator Dorman Long - later Redpath Dorman Long - this took him into the heavy engineering sector and would almost certainly have been his first introduction to cranes.

Having qualified as a chartered accountant he joined EMI and moved to London, where he eventually became involved with the conglomerate British Electric Traction - later to become BET - which owned a number of businesses including an electricity generation operation and a large bus division and transport companies, which were nationalised in the 1960s by the Labour Government.

The sale of these companies led to it accumulating a £68 million cash pile. Thompson began working for the group as it was looking to invest these funds in acquisitions and diversification. One of the first investments the company made was the acquisition of road roller and compaction equipment rental company Eddison Plant Hire, which also got into Forklift rental. Thompson became the company secretary and was recruited into the holding group's mergers and acquisition team where he became involved with the acquisition of JD White from the White family in 1970. The company had started out as a scrap handling company in Teeside but had branched out into crane hire. Having purchased the business he was told that since he had seemed so keen on acquiring the company, he should go and manage it. His appointment as managing director of JD White kicked off his crane industry career in which he remained until he retired in the late 1980s.

Once he had got to grips with the company, he decided to sell off the scrap operations. JD White had entered the crane rental business by accident



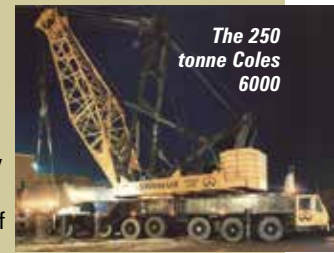
Stan Thompson

after having built or modified a crane for scrap handling duties with large magnet attachment. Before long the local South Durham Steel works had spotted it and wanted to hire it in on a long-term contract. This process was repeated, and the company became increasingly interested in crane hire. Thompson used the proceeds from the sale of the scrap business to expand the crane hire operation, developing it into a company that had a first class reputation for being well organised and quality conscious. Early in his JD White days he teamed up with David Morton, who had joined the company in 1965 as a sales rep and later moved into operations.

The two made a formidable team as they expanded the business and polished the company's reputation, adding a number of large cranes to the top end of the fleet and acquiring a number of other northern-based crane and equipment rental companies, including Derby based Bowmer & Kirkland and W.C.Mandy of South Shields.

BET continued to acquire equipment rental companies, both in the UK and in the USA, this included Grayston Crane Hire which it took over in the early 1980s. As part of a reorganisation it insisted on merging it with JD White, although the two companies had significantly different business cultures and reputations. By 1985 Thompson had fallen out with BET's senior management and decided to call it a day. The business went on to become Grayson White and Sparrow, following the acquisition of the Bath-based Sparrow Crane Hire business and was later absorbed into Ainscough Crane Hire.

After leaving JD White Thompson joined Hewden Stuart crane hire, where he remained until he retired. During this time he also played a significant role, with ex colleague David Morton, in negotiating the UK's National Agreement for Crane Operators Pay and conditions, which was widely adopted by the industry.



Stan Thompson (R) at a hand over of the Coles Colossus in 1978 from Don Hassal of Coles



Stan Thompson far right, with co-director David Moreton - second from the left - at a Liebherr crane hand over

Thompson led an active life, having played football in the Northern League when he was younger, and progressing to golf as his business career developed. He became a strong player and was involved with the running of his local golf club, bringing his accountancy skills to bear. He remained a member until the very end and played his last game earlier this year. He leaves behind wife Brenda, daughter Judith and son Peter.

## Colin Parks 1953 - 2019

**UK veteran crane operator Colin Parks passed away at the end of September he was 66. With more than 40 years experience in the crane industry, Parks was described as a true gentleman and always willing to help and act as a mentor, something he did for many during his time in the industry.**



Colin Parks

He began his career as a motor mechanic before joining a local building firm in Barrow-in-Furness, north west England, which happened to have an eight tonne Hydracon Masksman truck crane, which fuelled his passion for cranes. There he met a man named Gary, a career long friend who later persuaded Parks to join Hewden Stuart. After 40 years with Hewden, Ainscough Crane Hire - where he operated its first 250 tonner then later its first 500 tonner - he went to Crane Services and latterly Weldex. During that time he worked his way up from the Hydracon to a 1,350 tonne Liebherr LR 11350 crawler crane.

He is survived by wife Rose, daughter Nicola and son Andrew.

The following is one of several comments from ex colleagues on hearing the news of his premature death.

*I was absolutely gutted to hear of Colin's passing, he was an absolute legend, whether driving a mobile at Hewden, or a crawler at Weldex, you always knew you had a quality operator. Not a primadonna, an honest man who bestowed a wealth of knowledge upon young lads like myself coming through.*

*I had the pleasure of working with Colin as green young kid, where he showed me how to operate a Coles Speedcrane and I had the ultimate pleasure of having Colin on the last job he carried out for Weldex, at the Port of Tyne Biomass storage facility. Colin, Cammy and a few of the lads going out to celebrate his retirement and my birthday. Thank you Colin, for the fun, the bollockings and the friendship Steys.*



Colin Parks during his time at Crane Services