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Updated guidance on Lifting Operations With Excavators

The UK Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group has published an updated safety guidance document entitled 'Lifting Operations With 180° and 360° Excavators.' The group has revised, expanded and updated the original guidance which was published in 2008. Additions are so widespread that the guidance has increased from seven to 72 pages.

The group is chaired by the CPA, with permanent representation and support from the Health & Safety Executive, contractors, rental companies, manufacturers and training organisations. The latest guidance thoroughly sets out the precautions and procedures that should be taken into account when planning and carrying out lifting operations with excavators and backhoe loaders. The precautions and procedures specified in the publication should enable work to be carried out safely and in accordance with the law.

A core message within the guidance is that in terms of selection of lifting equipment, excavators are primarily designed for excavating and handling loose materials rather than lifting suspended loads. The document advocates that an excavator should not be the first or only choice for lifting, even if it is already on site, is quicker and maybe more cost effective than using more appropriate lifting equipment that has been specifically designed for lifting operations such as cranes and telehandlers.

The guidance details that the use of excavators introduces a number of additional risks when carrying out lifting operations which are not present with conventional cranes, such as:

- Fast articulation and slew movements

- The need to operate the boom and dipper arm simultaneously to keep the load vertical when lifting or placing loads.
- Standard excavator rated capacity warning devices generally only warn, do not prevent the handling of loads in excess of the rated capacity and can be muted by the operator.
- The rated capacity varies if lifting over the front and rear or side-on to the machine and if features such as blades, stabilisers and axle locks are engaged or not.
- That some appointed persons may not have the experience of planning and supervising lifting operations with excavators.

Topics covered within the guidance include planning and supervision requirements, machine selection, roles and responsibilities, specific issues and maintenance and inspections. A key part of the guidance is a flowchart that introduces a hierarchy and sequence to the planning process. The section on specific issues includes information on the factors that affect stability, ground conditions and specific issues when using 180 degree excavators, fork attachments and tilt-rotators during lifting operations.

The Good Practice Guide can be downloaded free of charge from www.cpa.uk.net/sfsgpublications



New Lifting Technician Trailblazer Apprenticeship now available

A new Lifting Technician Trailblazer Apprenticeship is now available and ready for delivery, following final approval from the Institute of Apprenticeships. The new apprenticeship framework has been devised by an employer-led Trailblazer working group and is supported by the Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA).

Designed for those who will operate a mobile, crawler or tower crane and undertake slinging and signalling duties, the new apprenticeship replaces the existing Construction Civil Engineering Plant Operator (Cranes Lifting) Framework Apprenticeship which will eventually be phased out.

The Trailblazer working group was headed by Laing O'Rourke and included Ainscough and Baldwins Crane Hire, BAM Nuttall, Balfour Beatty, Bronzeshield Lifting, Emerson Cranes, Skanska, Select, Sarens and Liebherr, as well as the CPA and CITB. The group was formed in 2014 to devise the standards and assessment plan for the apprenticeship, with the aim of integrating both crane operating skills with slinging/signalling skills to provide both the apprentice and employer with a greater scope of skills and to fully understand the lifting operations sector, preparing a pathway for the apprentice to become a crane supervisor and ultimately an appointed person.

The new Level 2 Lifting Technician Apprenticeship has a total training period of up to 24 months including work experience. The core training period has been derived as a minimum of 300 hours and as with all Trailblazer Apprenticeships, a formal training qualification does not form part of the apprenticeship. It is the End Point Assessment which determines competency, however NVQ's in Plant Operations (Cranes and Specialist Lifting) and Controlling Lifting Operations (Slinger/Signaller) need to be achieved before the end assessment can be undertaken.

This apprenticeship has been placed within the Education and Skills Funding Agency's funding band 11 allowing apprenticeship levy paying employers to spend up to £15,000 for the training and assessment of the apprentice. Non-levy payers can receive up to 90 percent of the maximum. Further information can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands.

The CPA is hosting the training and assessment documentation and a training syllabus, training record portfolio and EPA Portfolio which can be downloaded free of charge from the CPA website www.cpa.uk.net/trailblazer-downloads

