

Two-line lifting - is it legal?

Ask a group of UK crane hirers if they ever perform two-line lifts and some will say "never", some will say "occasionally" and some will say "if it's the best way and the driver is up to it". In a recent 'unscientific' C&A poll, however, the most common response was "no, it's illegal in the UK!"

But is it?

Further probing revealed that this was one of those UK crane industry "its illegal" myths that seem to emerge from time to time, such as that which existed until recently with regards the use of tag-axes on cranes.

The results of the survey required further investigation, so C&A approached the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and various manufacturers and safety officers to get their take on this cloudy subject. While not entirely clear cut, the general consensus seemingly confirmed that two-line lifting was not an illegal practise in the UK, and that in some cases, the HSE actually condoned it.

"It is definitely not illegal," said one HSE spokesperson, "and there is no law in the statute book that prevents users from using two lines for a single load lift. The HSE's approach is that prior to the lift, a risk assessment should be carried out, and that it may well be that using one crane with two hoists to lift and level a load is much safer than using two cranes."

The engineers at the manufacturers we spoke with said that they knew of no legislation that prohibited two-line lifting, but that any restriction would centre on the load moment indicator read out.

Most cranes in the UK that are fitted with two winches will only provide a load moment indication for one line at a time. It seems that if there is any restriction on two-line lifting, then this is it. Saying this, most experts agreed that as long as the load was well within the crane's lifting capacity and the capabilities of each hoist, then a simple risk assessment would clear the crane for the job. And alternate monitoring of each line during the lift would provide a safe and practical method.

We also discovered that two-line and combined load monitoring



A typical example of a two-line lift is that of a windmill's rotor blade.

and readout technology is available to crane hire companies wishing to carry out such work on a regular basis.

So, for which jobs are two-line lifting practises mostly used? Well, the balancing or turning of a bulky or awkward load was the most commonly cited application. It seems that for many applications, the main hoist is used to take most of the weight of a load, while the second line is used to balance or, in some cases, rotate the load.

One engineer, while endorsing that two-line lifting has its practical applications, was careful to state that much depends on how the second line is used. For instance, during lifts where the line is used well off the vertical in order to pull or manipulate a load, unusual stress factors may be exerted in directions that the crane's structure is simply not designed for. Load lines should never be used off of the vertical. So here, as in most aspects of two-line lifting, common sense and good practice must be applied.

Hopefully, this brief review of the subject will serve to shed some light on the practise of two-line lifting. If you have any comments or points to make on this subject, then please write to C&A via mail, fax or e-mail, or call one of our editors. We would be happy to publish your views.