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READERS LETTERS

DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE - A BURNING ISSUE

Dear Mark and Leigh,

Drugs and Alcohol are without a doubt a major concern for the construction sector though sadly only the Scottish Plant Owners Association appears to be flying the flag for change. The HSE, Unions, CLC, BuildUK and others seem keen to maintain the status quo. The following paper highlights the situation.

Background

The Contractors Plant hire Association (CPA) recently issued in their November 2022 bulletin's legal section the reported increase in drug and alcohol abuse at working from home. Sadly I feel the CPA has missed an ideal opportunity to push the envelope and reinforce the industry concerns regarding the HSE's failure to record substance or alcohol abuse in its annual statistics and the need for legislation change. Whilst the Covid pandemic will have seen an increase in drinking whilst working from home, it pales into insignificance compared to the problems out on UK construction sites where major stakeholders and contractors are seemingly sleepwalking their way to a disaster in the making.

Current legislation

While drug testing is legislated in many sectors such as rail, aviation and shipping, amazingly it isn't mandatory in construction. The Trades Union Congress notes how, despite claims from drugs-testing companies, there's no concrete evidence showing that drug testing is becoming commonplace in British workplaces where testing isn't required by law. However, it did explain that there is increased usage of drug testing in the construction sector.

Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) audit - 2020

A recent survey conducted by the Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS) has found that the majority of UK construction workers are concerned about how drugs and alcohol affect their workforce. The survey, which included over 1,200 participants, found that 59% of them have concerns or issues related to drugs and alcohol in the workplace. The survey also revealed that 35% of workers have witnessed their colleagues working under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Individuals who abuse drugs and alcohol increase the risk for accidents, lower the quality of work and drive up costs due to absenteeism, health issues and poor work quality. It was reported in recent times that construction workers working on the Tottenham Stadium were under the influence of alcohol and drugs on site. An anonymous source claimed, "There were people off their heads, drinking cans first thing in the morning before going on site and snorting cocaine in the toilets." This just shows how rife drug and alcohol abuse is within the

industry and that to some workers, this is just the norm. There are countless other examples.

HSE perspective

When questioned on their fatal accident statistics in a freedom of information (FOI) request the HSE responded with: "The annual fatal and employer reported non-fatal injury statistics are based on RIDDOR definitions and notifications, and as such do not specifically capture underlying causes or contributory factors like alcohol or drug use. Additionally, when an injury is reported, RIDDOR notifications require information about the "kind" of accident such as a slip/trip or fall from height. It is not possible to analyse these figures by other dimensions like alcohol or drug use." Additionally, the HSE have stated, in response to another FOI request: "The reason for the HSE not holding this information is because the HSE is the enforcing authority for health and safety, and we only prosecute under health and safety legislation. An offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 would be a matter for the Police."

Out of the 142 workers killed at work in 2020/21 how many had autopsy/medical tests that indicate excessive drugs/alcohol in their system and why were none of the fatalities/non-fatalities attributable to either drugs or alcohol abuse? We don't know and neither does the HSE!

The law needs changing to give the HSE a dispensation to prosecute under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as an enforcing authority.

Who within the sector is proactive in highlighting the drugs & alcohol problem?

The current widespread problem of operators failing drugs and alcohol tests without any fear of their competence cards being suspended or withdrawn has been well publicised by the Scottish Plant Owners Association (SPOA) who appear to be the only trade association willing to tackle the challenge head on as a proliferation of trade bodies, card schemes and major stakeholders seem intent on keeping their heads well and truly below the parapets.

In 2020 the SPOA put forward a proposal to the CPA Council concerning drugs and alcohol testing for consideration and executive action. The CPA Council considered the approach but reached the conclusion that they would not support the proposal for revoking or suspending the CPCs or NPORS cards of operators who had tested positive for drugs or alcohol. As a leading stakeholder in decisions relating to plant operations, the CPA's decision to be unresponsive in the area of drug and alcohol abuse with plant operators beggars belief. The only suggestion from the CPA was to point the

SPOA toward their published guidance, Medical Fitness for Plant Operatives, which ironically does not give any guidance on drugs and alcohol testing!

Workplace injuries and HSE statistics

It is nothing less than shocking that the HSE does not record substance or alcohol abuse as a factor in RIDDOR incidents investigated, therefore there are no official figures published on this subject. In its current guise in publishing the health and safety at work summary statistics for Great Britain 2021, the HSE would appear to have us view their workplace injury statistics through rose tinted spectacles with any drugs and alcohol figures swept well and truly under the carpet. The law needs changing to give the HSE a dispensation to prosecute under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as an enforcing authority.

What is the solution for the construction sector?

With the HSE hamstrung by legislation, trade associations and stakeholders unwilling/unable to act and trades unions with an entrenched viewpoint, what chance have we in changing the status quo? Introducing drug and alcohol testing has the benefit of reducing usage as it is often all that is needed to motivate drug and alcohol avoidance in all but the most resistant and dependent users. It acts as an extremely effective deterrent and enforces the idea that drug and alcohol misuse at work will not be tolerated.

The sector has the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) whose stated mission is to provide sector leadership to the construction industry. The CLC have stated in their main objectives that "the aim has been to move away from top-down HSE led activity to joint working with industry." As with the Covid-19 pandemic emergency where the CLC very successfully convened the industry response, surely the drugs and alcohol problem is similarly worthy of pooling our resources and working collaboratively to initiate urgent change?

The CLC is well placed to expedite action on the implementation of drugs and alcohol testing by instructing the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) to mandate all their 38 card schemes for drug and alcohol testing requirements for those on site. This type of timely action could also demand that cardholders could be endorsed or say "three strikes and a lifetime ban" considered for any mandating of change.

Mick Norton BEM

HISTORICAL GEM

Dear Mark,

I was fascinated to read your historical gem about the John Laing-owned 50HB internal climber that was employed on the Barbican development in London. As a Laing apprentice at Elstree, I worked with the erection team both on the production of the dismantling derrick and the removal of the 50HB from the completed Barbican tower. We also re-erected that crane on the elevated section of London's new Western Avenue extension at the interchange adjacent to Royal Oak underground station.

Where did you manage to find that bit of ancient trivia? It brings back memories of a very different time in the construction plant business. You would be horrified by the working practices of the time!

Regards to Leigh.

Peter Cooper

This item was all down to industry veteran Nick Johnson, who seemed to be one of the few that recalled the fact that Liebherr, rather than being a 'Johnny come lately' to the hydraulic luffing tower crane market, was indeed a pioneer. When we shared Nick's information with the Liebherr team at Bauma, all of those in the marketing and product development departments - without exception - seemed oblivious to the fact that the new hydraulic luffer on show was not the company's first.

Although the cranes seem to have sold quite well in the UK, their popularity clearly did not spread, and it were eventually dropped. As they often say, sometimes the time is just not right for a particular new product.

THANK YOU!

I very much appreciated your report on Bauma, I liked the fact that you did not fill the space with acres of text, but rather provided us with a visual impression of the show. Unfortunately, I could not attend the show this year, something I deeply regret. At least I now have a feel for it. Maybe you should step it up with a video tour of the show, perhaps with some intelligent and knowledgeable commentary? I for one would enjoy it and I am sure that I am not alone.

Thank you all for the work you do, I really enjoy Cranes & Access and sad as it may sound read it from cover to cover each month. Keep up the good work - it is not only a useful tool in our business but a pleasurable one too.

Bryan Alwyn

LEE WHITMORE 1950-2023

Lee Whitmore, the co-founder of Lee Lifting passed away on Tuesday, January 10th, following a long illness. He had only just celebrated his 72nd birthday in December, retiring as a director of the company that bears his name in 2018.

Lee Whitmore started out in the crane industry as a young crane driver in the early 1970s with Sparrows Crane Hire, working from its Colnbrook depot, near Heathrow airport. Then in 1981 he made the bold move of setting up his own business in partnership with his wife Kath, who remains a director of the company.

The first machine in the fleet was a 20 tonne Kato truck crane and business was obviously good as the following year the couple acquired a new 25 tonne Grove TMS 250 truck crane and had the luxury of choosing a corporate colour and livery for the new business. Lee was keen that the company's cranes would stand out and so they plumped for a vibrant bright green, which he dubbed 'Lee Lifting Green'. On taking delivery of the new crane, he went directly to a job at Pinewood Studios where his enthusiasm and drive made him stand out as someone who was reliable and did a good job.

Over the years the company has provided cranes for many of the big films made at the studios including several Bond films, such as Casino Royale in 2006, for which he teamed up with City Lifting to supply two tower cranes and a mobile for filming in the Bahamas. Other films the company has worked with range from Indiana Jones and Superman all the way through to Harry Potter and Star Wars. His children point out that Lee Lifting continues to carry on his passion and dedication for providing a quality service.

His son Danny sums up what many of those who knew have said: "A great man for many different and unique reasons. His humour, his passion, his ambition or maybe as the man who flew superman!! He will be greatly missed by us all."

He leaves behind his wife and founding partner Kath, along with sons Danny and Jody and sisters Cassie and Jemma.

Lee Whitmore



Lee Whitmore with his Kato truck crane



Lee Whitmore with wife and business partner Kath and what looks like a brand new Jones IF15AT

BRIAN LANG 1963 - 2022

UK regional crane sales manager Brian Lang of Terex Demag and Liebherr died over the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

He retired from Liebherr last year following his diagnosis with leukaemia and had only recently gone through a stem cell transplant, but sadly passed away on the 29th of December with his family by his side. He was 59 and just six weeks short of his 60th birthday.

Brian was appointed as sales manager for Terex Demag at the end of December 2005 and worked with the company in Scotland and Ireland for eight and a half years, leaving in 2013 to join Liebherr as regional sales manager for Scotland.

Brian Lang was one of the good guys, a true gentleman, decent, intelligent with a good sense of humour and always ready to find time to help and mentor others.

He was very good at what he did, always well prepared, but also those colleagues who travelled with him on sales trips comment on how he was always good company and fun to be with. He will be missed by many both in the UK and by those at the manufacturing plants in Germany.

He leaves behind wife Lisa, son Jason and daughter Rachel, of whom he was very proud.



Brian Lang



LEONARD WHITE 1958 - 2023

Veteran UK crane operator Len White tragically died in a road traffic accident on Saturday the 7th of January, he was only 64.

In the early 1980s Len White joined Essex Lifting Service as an operator, moving on to Fairview Crane Hire, Quinto Crane Hire and Baldwins, among others. Those who knew him well describe him as an outstanding crane operator, in an era when operating a crane was a more dangerous job than it is today. When he started out as a crane operator, the 'seat of the pants' technique was not only still widely practiced but was also necessary to do a good job.



Len White

Early on in his career he began to develop a reputation for having a keen eye on health and safety, not only taking it seriously, but also discussing its importance with colleagues chatting about potential scenarios and the associated risks of such jobs.

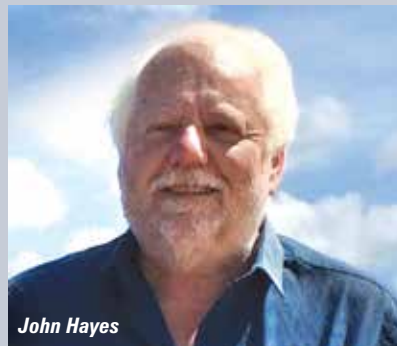
More recently he set up his own Health & Safety training company - Land and Marine Training - combining all his experience with the dedication and commitment to safety that he was known for.

One of his friends said: "Len had quite a laid-back way of training candidates, he was a great storyteller and would happily share his own experiences to pass on his knowledge. There are many, many people in all walks of life that have achieved their qualifications because of his method of teaching and testing. He will be sadly missed in the construction industry."

JOHN ARTHUR HAYES 1953 - 2022

We have received the sad news that John Hayes - an editor of Cranes Today and Access Today in the 1970s and early 1980s - has died. He passed away on Christmas Eve at the age of 69.

He began his career in 1976 when he joined Cranes Today magazine as a journalist - at the time it was the only English language crane magazine in Europe. A few years later he was promoted to assistant editor and then managing editor. He was also editor of sister magazine Access Today and spent much of his time covering the growing powered access market. Towards the end of 1982 he left Cranes Today and the crane industry to set up Underline Communications. Since then, he has worked in a wide range of PR roles, working with Tibbet & Britten, Linpac, DHL, Exel and Rockwood. He was also a pioneer in the internet age, founding Webmaker in 1996. Since then, he has become a well-respected and talented website designer.



John Hayes

Those that knew him say that he was "a kind and extremely knowledgeable man who will be sadly missed".

WILLIAM JEFFERSON BUTLER 1939 - 2023

We have received the sad news that Bill Butler - the founder of Able Equipment Rental in California - has died. He passed away unexpectedly on Tuesday 10th of January at the age of 83.



Bill Butler

Bill Butler set up his rental business in 1961 at the age of 22, just three years after he graduated from High School. He found a small yard in Santa Fe Springs, Los Angeles and worked from a simple Nissen/Quonset hut on the site, in Orange County, not far from Anaheim.

The company grew steadily over the years and along the way Bill was joined by his son Jeff, with the two working together to build the business - both organically and via acquisitions - into a regional rental operation operating from seven locations with 200 employees and a fleet largely made up of aerial work platforms. Then in 1998, as Bill approached 60, the two decided to accept a takeover offer from United Rentals and sold the business.

Butler is survived by wife Lois and three children - son Jeff, along with daughters Pamela and Patricia. Bill's grandson Jake Butler - Jeff's son - still works in the rental industry as a sales rep for H&E Equipment Services.



ERIC GUIOT 1946-2022

We have only just received the news that Eric Guiot - former chief executive of French rental company Salti - passed away on November 7th, he was 76.

Based on the edge of Lille, family-owned Salti was founded in 1950 by Eric's father and then managed by his mother until he and his brother Alain took over the business in 1976. Under his time at the helm the business became a pioneer of the French self-propelled rental market, when it was still very much a niche product. Eric stepped down from the day-to-day management of the business in 2011, handing over to a third generation. He was also an active participant in the French rental association DLR. Today the business operates from 40 locations with 400 employees and a fleet that includes fixed and 360 degree telehandlers, all types of aerial lifts and spider cranes.

He leaves behind wife Isabelle, daughter Valentine and several stepchildren.



Eric Guiot

Eric Guiot was a very special character, a canny negotiator, but one who believed in fairness and most importantly had a most wonderful sense of humour. It was not unusual to leave the premises without an order in your hand, but you would never regret the visit and would often get a second chance to close the deal over the next week or two. If not, there was always another deal to be done and they invariably required a visit.

A thoroughly decent man, he will be sadly missed by the many people who knew and worked with him.



DON'T GIVE IN TO CYBER CRIMINALS

The following letter is clearly a spam letter which would be normally be consigned to the spam folder and sender blocked. But in this case it does make a good and simple point, so we would like to share it with our readers.

By the way we have not contacted them, nor plan to, but we do take this threat seriously and work with our software and systems suppliers to back up data and try to keep data safe.

Hi Leigh

Ransomware is big business, in fact Cyber Crime is still the most profitable criminal enterprise on the planet! Cyber criminals trick you into downloading malicious software, steal your data and lock you out of your systems - then demand a huge ransom to release it back to you.

If your business falls victim, it's hugely tempting to just pay the ransom. That's what many business owners do, because the consequences of losing all the data is too terrible to think about.

But we have a different suggestion: Never pay...because there's a good chance that you won't get your data back anyway. These are criminals you're dealing with. And just under half of victims who do pay to get their data back find that much of it is corrupt.

By paying you're also painting a big fat target on your back. 80% of

victims who pay a ransom are hit with a follow-up attack soon after.

The best thing you can do is have a resilience plan in place. You want to stop attacks succeeding in the first place and lessen the impact of an attack if it does happen. Also, have a plan to get your business back up and running as soon as possible without giving in to the criminals.

If you want to speak to the experts, we offer an initial 15 minute video call with no obligation to buy anything, ever, but it's a conversation that might be crucial for your business.

Yours,

Tony Capewell

IT Happiness Provider

Milton Keynes

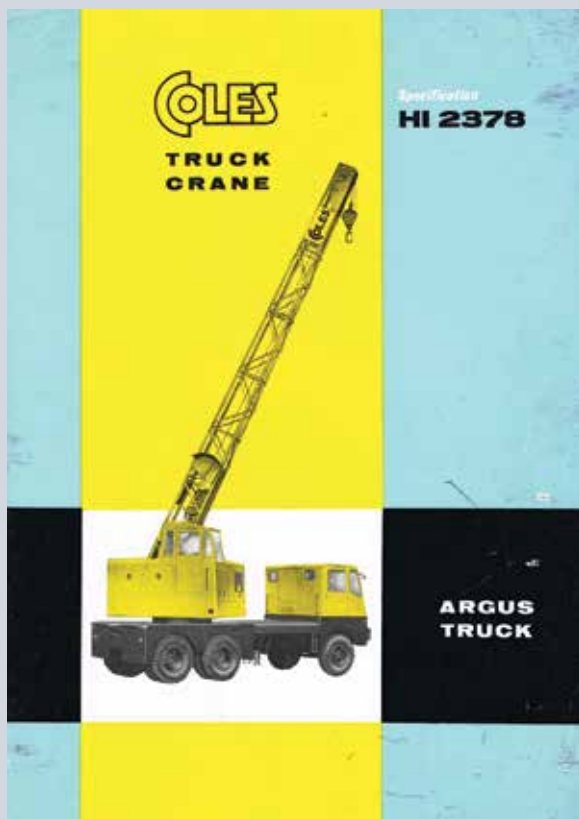
A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

From time to time, we receive photos of old cranes from our readers which usually say something like...

"I came across this old photograph of an XYZ crane, which was very popular during the 1960s..." or "I came across this photo and wondered if you knew what crane (or platform) it is, and when it was built?" In the latter case if we cannot identify it we usually post it on Vertikal.net and typically our online readers can identify it within an hour or two.

This week we received the photograph below of a Coles truck mounted diesel electric cantilever boomed crane. We have no idea where or when it was taken - the livery looks a little like Sarens. As to the crane it looks like a Coles Challenger with optional third axle and full width cab. Or a smaller Argus?

This came in at the last minute, but we were thinking about making this a regular feature, especially after the reaction we received regarding the original Liebherr hydraulic luffers last month. We would of course do a far better research job than we have with this one. But please do let us know what you think.



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