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Letters



Good morning,

I am a fan of your cranes & access magazine, which is extremely informative. I would like to ask you, if it is mandatory that the crawler cranes must be placed over wood mats to establish better stability.

Thank you in advance.

Yours sincerely / Μετά τιμής

Miltiadis Spiridakis

HSE Specialist QSE

Vestas Mediterranean

We wrote back:

Dear Miltiadis, many thanks for your kind comments, No it is not mandatory, it all depends on the size of the crawler crane, the loads applied in its fully loaded configuration and the type of ground it is moving on. Cranes that need to move while fully loaded do need further measures as the moving and turning of the tracks while loaded, creates additional stress on the ground. Generally very large crawler crane almost always need mats, while very small crawlers rarely need mats, and all those in between will depend on the factors mentioned.

I hope this all makes sense

We can publish your letter if you like to generate further input and comment, either with your full name or as an anonymous request?

Best wishes

Dear Leigh,

My Question goes more for LR1400 size crawler cranes. I am very positive to publish my letter as I would like to get some concrete arguments for using mats under such cranes. Note to add, that the cranes I am referring to, lift loads of 40-50 tonnes at a height of 90-100 metres.

Great talking with you.

Miltiadis Spiridakis

Dear Miltiadis,

The LR1400 is bang in the middle, it will manage without mats on very good firm ground, BUT where you would have to be careful is if you started moving with 50 tonnes on 100 metres of boom! You really ought to be running on mats unless the ground is not only very firm, but also has been tested along the route. The problem is that the loadings on the front of the tracks will be high and any attempt to turn will create further stress on the surface. If on good firm ground and operating from one position it might be OK, but you would need to carry out a proper ground survey and check the ground capacity against the ground bearing pressures published by the manufacturer.

If in doubt always use mats! And with up to 100 metres of boom in place it is just not worth the risk

Let's see what others, including our readers might say

Best wishes

Leigh

This is exactly the case. It is moving for a few metres with full load. It would be interesting to hear input from different interested parties.

Thank you again for the support.

Miltiadis

Note: Before we get criticised for daring to hand out advice, this was not for a job due to start that very day, it was and is more to garner more advice and clarification on the issue which clearly causes an issue with crane operator/owners around the world, given the number of crawler cranes that overturn. All input advice and reference to other documents would be warmly welcomed and will be published.

Dear Sir,

It really bothers me when people get 'offended' when you politely point out that they are running a significant risk, or breaking the law with dangerous working practices - both when working at height or lifting. It is as though being 'offended' somehow makes them right.

I live in Glasgow and see this kind of thing a lot, I used to try educate people in what they are doing wrong but not once was it met with any gratitude. Every single time it was aggression so now I don't even bother. Sunday in Glasgow is extremely busy for truck mounted lifts, on average maybe seven or eight and I guarantee less than 50 percent of them are set-up properly, it's a joke and the worst ones for it are council operated ones, I don't ever remember seeing one single one set-up correctly.

I've only been in the industry for seven years but the rest of my working life was spent with company name withheld to protect identity..... and I have been shocked at the lack of respect for health and safety in this industry and how more people aren't killed or seriously injured I honestly don't know, it seems Lady Luck is extremely busy.

Anyhow thanks for responding I do love the site, it's great for information

Thanks very much

Name withheld for obvious reasons

This is very typical, and we take a lot of flack and even threats ourselves when publishing Death Wish or 'Who trained him them' photos, or accidents. However, in many cases such reports do lead to a shake-up in the way the company works and everyone gains. Another typical reaction is to try and suppress coverage, and if anyone tries to take a photo of someone working inappropriately they risk aggression - sometimes extreme aggression! This inclination to suppress is not limited to operators, small companies or 'one man bands'. Some of the worst offenders are big contractors, who will use their financial muscle to squash any coverage. The most irritating examples come from companies that take the moral high ground on safety, gathering certifications and even winning safety awards. As we start a new year it would be nice if the lifting industry could follow the long established example set by the aviation industry.

Dear Sir,

As an Ainscough crane operator currently in negotiations, backed by the union Unite, asking for some 12 percent pay increase. The management have treated us like trained apes for far too long.....

This letter was sent in by mobile phone, and appears to have been cut off mid sentence.

A ballot for strike action was due to close on January 11th, after the company's revised two year pay offer of 2.5 and 2.75 percent, was overwhelmingly rejected by operator's belonging to the Unite union.

Dear Sir,

In his outstanding book Checklist Manifesto the author Dr. Atul Gawande clearly points out that work related mistakes are caused by ignorance and ineptitude. People who work at height cannot afford to ignore safety equipment and the rules of gravity. This year the frequency of falls from height has been a weekly occurrence especially in tree work and many have been fatal. I am preaching safety and I know the audience is not deaf. I preach this for my team and we work safely. It does not cost us any more to be safe... AAMOF (As a Matter Of Fact) it costs us less because we can work the next day just as ably.

Yours

This one came into our letters page but we do not seem to have saved the writers name in the file, possibly because he did not include it or possible due to our sloppiness – given what a good letter this is if the writer would like to claim credit we will correct this oversight in the next issue. Ed

Dear Sir,

A friend of mine spotted a large truck mounted lift working in the street today, he took a photograph and sent it to me with some questions about what type of machine it was and asking if it was not a little too big for the job it was working on.

To start with I thought it was funny and that the machine was a bit of an overkill so I posted it on a Facebook, where a few people proceeded to point out that no outrigger mats had been used and possibly no harness also pavement was not shut off.

The operator then noticed it on Facebook and the whole thing escalated to a point where the photographer's employers complained that as it was on Facebook and they were "ruining his business".

It seems to me if he had set the machine up properly he wouldn't have had anything to complain about and would have got some good free publicity for his nice looking machine.

We have withheld the writer's name and edited the text slightly to protect the writer who has made a very good and important point.

We totally agree, we know from bitter experience that this sort of reaction is not uncommon, companies that simply do not bother to ensure that operators follow good working practices are the fastest to complain when a photograph taken of their machine goes on line, often complaining that they have been victimised. They don't seem to understand that if only they did things properly they could relax when photos are taken and enjoy the positive publicity. In spite of this we have found that such occurrences do often prove to be a catalyst to the protagonists changing their ways. In which case all the grief is well worth it. Ed

Sebastian Wilkinson set out to cycle from Brisbane to Sydney in order to raise funds for cancer charities in memory of his father Simon who died in July. Here is letter we will also add parts of his daily blog on line.

Dear Leigh,

To say we totally underestimated it would be the most accurate way of summing this challenge up, however we did manage to complete it within the five days that we had set ourselves - but only just. The final time was four days, 23 hours and 10 minutes!

We experienced everything from hailstorms to 46 degree's with forest fires, not factors we had accounted for. The physical and mental aspects started to take their toll by day two after the bike broke and it took five hours to fix in Byron Bay. The end result was that I had to cycle through the night to make up the miles, with just two hours sleep that night and another 16.5 hours in the saddle the following day. Dehydration combined with sleep deprivation and jet lag meant the whole trip became hell. I then came off the bike on the Thursday evening in a storm, damaging my elbow and the bike.

However arriving at the opera house was a moment that I will never forget, all of a sudden the blood sweet and tears was all worth it. We have now raised just over our target of £11,000 for Macmillan in my dad's memory.

I would like to thank the industry for their very kind contributions, especially Gordon Leicester and Facelift who played an instrumental role in helping fund the challenge. If anyone feels compelled to donate we would welcome their support at www.grippingmiles.com which has link to our just giving page.

Many thanks Sebastian Wilkinson

Below are some excerpts from the daily blog written by support van driver Charlie Gilmour:

"Fresh start, new day. After yesterday's issues with the bike breaking and tracking issues, the focus was to plough on, reaching rest stops in good time and beating the midday sun.

Sometimes things don't go to plan, and today, they didn't. Up a 4am, prepped the bike, greased the chain and checked tyre pressures, but in doing so the inner tube valve snapped, rendering the tube completely useless. After a swift change of tube Seb was back on the Pacific Highway, heading south.

The road train lorries in Australia are fast and reckless. Within 10 minutes Seb had already encountered too many close calls. The solution: Drive behind on the hard shoulder, hazards on, protecting Seb from the traffic.

No longer than 10 minutes later, loose wood was thrown into Seb, injuring him and damaging the bike cracking the carbon wheel, and stopping it from turning. The solution: Remove the front brake, allowing movement and stability.

The route was now deviating away from the Pacific Highway, along quieter country roads, perfect for the bike. But bad things come in threes. After a great push along the quieter roads, making up lost time, we came across the 'Road' designed according to the Garmin for a road bike, this was not a road, more a path a deer might trample in a wood. Unsafe, dangerous and impossible to cross. Seb was now in the midday sun and having to go back on himself to reach a detour.

Cycling the distance from Brisbane to Sydney is no easy feat, we knew this before we left the UK - but underestimated big time. To see a man come off a bike with bleeding sores and rashes all over his body, dehydrated, jet lagged and dealing with bereavement isn't something you want to witness, all you want to say is "pack it in mate" - you can't, you can't intervene, the cycle is more than simply Brisbane to Sydney, it's not just raising money for a Cancer Charity. You strip it down to a young bloke dealing with a death of a family member, turning the grief into something positive, without which the cycle and amount raised would have never happened.