Readers Letters

Dear Sir,

A UK hire company has adopted an out of service procedure that involves leaving a suspended load attached to the hook block of its tower cranes.
The cranes appear unattended and wind sails have also been added.
The site in London borders a live overhead railway one side and private properties on the other. Does this affect the stability of the crane in out of service with regard to additional wind forces exerted from the rear, actually increasing the loads imposed? Is this in line with 'Best Practice' and with any recent guidelines issued by the CPA, TCIG, or current ACOPS?

Name withheld

The cranes concerned are Comedil owned and operated by Select, space did not allow the recommended out of service angle for the jib due to over-sailing. Select contacted the manufacturer which suggested suspending a one tonne load on the hook to compensate for the higher boom angle. A wind sail was also added to help ensure best positioning to the wind with the extra weight. The resulting crane is without doubt safer and better balanced than without the load - although leaving a load suspended like this does go against normal recommended practice. One point that was raised by the experts we spoke to was that the weights were too high, and in serious wind might have swung into and collided with the jib. We understand that this has been adjusted since. One very valid point that was made was that if a safety cage was put over the railway and if out of service over sailing was not such an issue I the UK, a regular top slewing tower crane could have been used? - Or for that matter the jib of the luffer could have been set at its normal out of service radius. Ed

The letter was received with photos of the two cranes

Dear Sir,

With regards to outrigger mats for trailer mounted booms and self drive booms etc, could you advise on what size pad would be considered to be a good general all round mat? I have just enquired about buying some proper pads from a well-known supplier and they have said that there are two sizes that are most popular, 300mm and 500mm.
The thing that concerns me is that if I purchase the 500mm pads and a customer has a problem with the machine still sinking, am I liable because we have supplied the pads? I/we can't see what the ground conditions on site are like and even if we can see, we don't know what the ground below is like. I know you believe pads are a good idea and should be supplied, however how can we do this in your opinion without leaving ourselves open to trouble?

Yours sincerely

Simon Rush

Bucks Access Rentals Ltd

Simon Rush raises an issue that is a concern of several rental companies. We have suggested in the past that the rental contact include a warning for machines with outriggers, that mats should be used, and that it is the customers' responsibility to assess the ground conditions and ensure that a sufficiently large mat is used to ensure that the machine does not sink into soft ground or exceed any point loading limitations. It would be a good idea for IPAF to introduce a standard clause for this that the industry as a whole might use. Ed

Dear Mark,

Mr Terry McGettigan's letter in your June/July issue raises a valid matter of concern to all crane users. Slew ring bolts lose their preload in service by yielding under load and if they are not tightened, they do not take their full share of the applied load and bolts near them are overloaded in their turn. These tend to yield and lose preload, so the problem spreads, with risk of ultimate failure.
If slew ring bolts, which repeatedly become lose, are simply re-tightened again and again, they are being continuously stretched risking eventually failure.
When I worked with Jones Cranes and Iron Fairy, I introduced a method for checking these bolts, which prevents this latter problem.
This was routinely to check slew ring bolts at 80 percent of full assembly torque, using a torque wrench, and if the bolt/nut moved at all under this load the bolt was replaced with a new bolt of correct specification, and the thread of the old bolt was permanently damaged to prevent re-use.
Once this regime was introduced we had no further slew ring problems, and I recommend something like it for general use on all cranes with slew rings.

Gordon Innes
(Formerly technical director of Jones Cranes Ltd.)

Letters to the editor:
Please send letters to the editor: Cranes&Access: PO Box 6998, Brackley NN13 5WY, UK. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. We also point out that letters are the personal views of our readers and not necessarily the views of the Vertikal Press Ltd or its staff.

Dear Sir,

I believe that the plans to reduce emissions through the immediate retro fit of Diesel Particulate Filters are ill conceived, costly and impractical, particularly in light of Non-Road Mobile Machinery stage IIIB emission standards, which engine manufacturers are on target to meet by 2010 - the stipulated timeframe.

The biggest issue is the cost and huge practical problems, ranging from £3,000 - £6,000 per machine, paid upfront by plant hirers, like us. Ultimately that cost is likely to be passed on to the contractor through increased hire rates leading to spiralling project costs. Inevitably the British taxpayer, at a time when most are feeling the pinch, will pick up the bill. In the case of the London Olympics, where projected costs have risen from the original estimate of £2.375 billion to £9.3 billion, is it possible to sustain higher rates for machines when budgets are already under scrutiny?

Practically there are still numerous unresolved issues. Firstly the accredited suppliers list, which was due to be published at the end of May 2008, still has not materialised, so there is still no official source for the technology. We understand that only a few DPF companies have been accredited - not enough for the list to be sent out. So we can't currently retrofit a DPF anyway.

So, is it really worth all the hassle? Will Londoners truly benefit from cleaner air from the legislation? The principles of controlling exhaust emissions are admirable and there is widespread support for measures that increase life expectancy by substantially reducing carbon particulate levels. However, the proposals for DPF's seem flawed.

Only 8% of particulate emissions in London are caused by plant. Fitting expensive DPF systems now will have little appreciable effect on overall emissions. It makes sense for all concerned to wait for Stage III B, which, by the time the issues are resolved, may well only be months away!

London is already benefiting too from stage IIIA engines and recent measures that halve the sulphur content of red diesel and cut particulate emissions by around 10% nationwide, more than the effect of the combined total of the projects in London.

In more ways than one measures are in place to reduce emissions without unnecessary cost and delay. The proposed legislation will only add cost and inconvenience to the process for very little gain. I am right behind the manufacturers in their recent call to scrap the implementation. Let's hope the GLA will see sense and accept our arguments.

With so much at stake financially for the plant hirers, it remains to be seen whether they will turn down business in London.

Barry Beavis, Boss Services, Chertsey, Surrey,

Dear Sir,

Please wake up congress in America. We need CDAC. How many people have to die.....Re: crane accident in Houston Texas.

Anonymous Please

This short but to the point plea came from a crane man in the Mid West of the USA following the collapse of Deep South's VersaCrane TC36000 in July which resulted in four deaths.

Dear Sir,

This mail is to let you know that I am very disappointed in your article on/photos of, the Wyoming accident with the Lampson crane. If you do not know the facts regarding the ground conditions then keep your yap shut!!! and your comments to yourself!! I am a good aquaintance with the Lampson people and their engineers. They do know what they are doing and of course you liberal, uneducated press with your hind site being 20/20 when it comes to any crane accident. Are you going to write false accusations regarding the crane accident in Kansas city?
Kristine Meinhardt

We reported on this accident, in June, in which a 1,100 ton Lampson Transilift LTL1100 collapsed at the Black thunder mine in Northeast Wyoming. The initial statement issued by the mine said that the cause of the accident was due to the ground shifting under the crane, causing it to tip. What Kristine took issue with was the fact that we said:
"A great deal of preparation was taken by Lamspons to walk this massive crane over the railway tracks into the site when it first arrived, without damaging what is one of the nations busiest railway routes. It is very hard to imagine therefore that the crane was lifting from ground that had not been tested and analysed to the 'nth' degree, and that massive margins for error were not then calculated into the lifting platform."

In the week since the accident, the only information coming out says that there had been a good deal of rain around that time and that this might have had an effect on the ground conditions. A 2,600 ton Lampson LTL 2600 has now moved into the mine to complete the job.

Dear Sir,

My company has started to buy tower cranes from a Chinese manufacturer (name given) and I wondered if you had any feedback from other readers or your own experience, regarding the structural integrity of these cranes?

So far from what I can see they appear to be fine, at least as they arrive, however it is clear to see that they have an inferior finish - they look cheaper - than say a Liebherr or a Comedil. But when you are paying around a third of the price that is to be expected.

I have seen major brand cranes whose structure was manufactured in China, such as the Potain MC 310 and while they have performed perfectly well, the finish was also of a lower standard and they deteriorated faster than on the cranes which they build in Europe. I imagine this will change over time, but then the price is likely to go up too. If you do have any input worth sharing I would be grateful of having it.

Thank you.

Name withheld, as permission to use was not received in time for publication