

Load up

Are loader cranes easy and intuitive to operate? “No” was editor **Keren Sall’s** unhesitating answer after a day spent on an ALLMI training course

Towards the end of last year I finally did my lorry loader training to enable me to receive my ALLMI certificate, thanks to T H White in Wiltshire. The trainer David Otterway had promised me it would be a tough day and he certainly was not joking!

The morning began with Otterway taking me through the theory part of the training. Health and safety legislation and technical terms relevant to lorry loaders were comprehensively covered.

We then went on to the ALLMI workbook and worked our way through it. It is written in clear understandable terms and related the information directly to the crane I would be using for the practical test – the Palfinger PK19000B. Otterway also explained what my responsibilities as a driver would be. The most important of these is safe operation of the machine at all times. This he told me called for a visual inspection of the lorry loader, as well as checking all safety systems prior to each shift. Visual inspection means checking the fluid levels, the structure of the machine, hoses and cables and all pins and retainers. In addition all safety systems need to be examined to ensure that they are in good working order. This includes checking that the legs open out and are stabilised properly when working and fold away cleanly and correctly.

“The driver is liable as well as the company if he knowingly takes out a defective machine,” said Otterway.

Other important tasks before a job include carrying out a site inspection. This means checking ground conditions and the proximity of hazards such as overhead electric cables. “You need 360 degrees of firm level ground. If it is soft,

drivers need to use railway sleepers and if the ground is damageable they need to use good hard boards.”

Otterway also discussed slinging and handling of loads plus the use of correct tackle. This needs to have been visually inspected on each occasion before use.

With the theory out of the way, Otterway warns me to prepare myself for the practical after lunch! Peering into the rain and sleet I step out into the freezing cold and wonder whether I should be here! Too late, my instructor shows me the controls in the cab and how to start the lorry loader.

Practice makes perfect

Next up is a demonstration of how to open up the front stabiliser legs which are closely followed by the back stabiliser legs. I have to do this by myself several times so that I know automatically what procedures to follow in opening up the crane and then folding it and the stabiliser legs away.

Once Otterway is happy that I can carry out this procedure without any help from him he shows me how to operate the

crane boom so the sling ends up in a bucket which he moves to a variety of positions. When I can carry this task out several times to his satisfaction, Otterway demonstrates the correct method of securing the load with slings and chains so that it is safe before an operator lifts it and how to lift it and place it in the designated place. I do this several times and it is not as easy as it looks – how far should I extend the main boom, the secondary boom and the extensions? By this time I have been standing in the rain and sleet for around three hours, a typical job site really, and I think my toes and fingers are about to drop off. My response to Otterway’s cheery enquiry on how I am doing is along the lines of “I’ve had enough and am not sure if I need a certificate.” His, correct, reply was: “That’s not the right attitude Keren.”

So I continue the task until he is completely satisfied that I can operate the lorry loader and lift a load in a safe and capable manner. This finally happens and, not a moment too soon, it’s back to the training room for the theory test. Otterway asks me verbal questions to which I have to provide the appropriate answers. It’s nerve wracking but very rewarding when Otterway finally tells me I have got my certificate. ■

