

Readers *Letters*



In December we received the photograph (see right) of a crane working on a prestigious Spencer Dock development in Dublin. If the counterweight had been correctly fitted on the higher crane it interfered with the slightly lower one. The crane company, one assumes with the agreement of the contractor (?) came up with the make-do solution in the photo.



We published the photo and received a number of incredulous responses, the two below represent the views of all our respondents, none of which thought that this was acceptable practice. We understand that less than 24 hours went by before the publicity caused a major investigation on site. Apparently the main thrust of which was to determine who took the photo rather than to rectify the dangerous situation. However the crane has been taken down.

Hi

Re your photo of a Comansa in Dublin with counter weights stacked, I have been erecting towers for 32 years and would never consider the likes of that. A sudden stop while slewing with a load caused by a power failure and the slew brakes coming on and I wouldn't like to be driving it or below it depending on those straps. I have seen concrete pipes strapped on (for counterweight) before. The same person that erected that Comansa had a crane up with a ton of 30mm rebar strapped on to an old BPR a couple of years ago. Liebherr do the same to the last ballast block on the 154 ECH but its got a proper frame.

Regards

Name withheld as editor precaution

Dear Sir,

There are a number of problems here, as is obvious to most. Number one, ballast on tower cranes is placed in specific locations on the counter jib. It's not just randomly placed as ballast anywhere. An engineer must determine it's location if it deviates from the manual via back moment calculations.

During operation it's common that the beams supporting these counterweights can flex laterally while starting and stopping slewing motions. What is retaining their location? Ballast on Cross Bases are subjected to far less movement yet are often designed with reliefs on the lowest weights to prevent excessive movement. Additionally I've seen weights improperly placed upon a cross base spall concrete due to the steel shifting below (see pic). The entire weight was cracking and had to be reinforced via an added I beam.

Who approved this? In the US no one outside of a professional licensed engineer or the manufacturer can accept this. Not even the leaser or contractor can make this decision and no manufacturer will put their name on this and wouldn't hire an engineer who would.

What is holding the weights in place laterally on top? I see one strap on a lower weight but none on top. Abrasion and compression may not be enough over time.

Finally is the weight loaded evenly side to side. In essence is the placement of the weight placing torsional loading on the counter jib and it's pendants beyond it's intended design? Is one pendant taking more than 50 percent of the load?

The contractor could lower the other crane or maybe fit a reinforced tower section to allow this crane to be taller. One or the other must be done. Later in the schedule of the job the cranes could then be tied in and climbed to allow for clearance of the building. It's not difficult, only costly. If I were in a meeting and this were requested more than once I'd be less than polite about the intelligence of the requester.

Thanks for the information.

Gaytor Rasmussen

Kent Engineering

Tukwillia, WA 98168

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 just read your article titled "Pink Scissors" and I happen to notice that not one of the six people on the lifts was wearing a harness. What image does this manufacturer project? Shouldn't they be supporting that a harness is one of the most important safety apparatus? I am from a country where it is law that before you use any lift, you must have a harness. The saying "100% ties off" is often used. Does anyone else find this odd?

Derek Holland

Holland Crane

We responded with our view on the wearing of harnesses in scissor lifts and pointed out that harnesses in all aerial work platforms are not in fact a legal requirement in Canada, which is where Mr Holland lives. This is always a hot topic though and we would appreciate your views, publishable or not.

Ed

Sir,

I am in full agreement with the use of low ground pressure pads when outriggers are used and a greater awareness of the inherent dangers of equipment becoming unstable when used in poor ground conditions, particularly in the training of operators.

However, I also believe that equipment manufacturers should also take on board the dangers highlighted by improper use of equipment in unsuitable ground conditions.

When equipment manufacturers advertise their products in action, (particularly lorry loaders and access equipment) they like to show their products in the best light and show off the versatility of the equipment. This is generally achieved by depicting the equipment operating on uneven or soft ground conditions (grass verges, construction sites where the ground is waterlogged etc.) If you look closely at these photographs, invariably, there are no low ground pressure mats employed and the basic pad provided by the equipment is used alone.

In my opinion, this sends out a misleading message to operators, in that this equipment can be used safely in such conditions. Experience has taught us that this is exactly the conditions that contribute to the equipment becoming unstable and sadly resulting in personal injury, damage to equipment and property.

We all know 'a picture paints a thousand words' and this is used as a powerful tool in the marketing business. The photographs need to be more realistic, particularly in the safety aspect concerning outrigger use and low ground pressure pads. When the manufacturers start using pads in their adverts, the message will start get through to a greater number of operators and users alike.

A similar situation arose some years ago when the 'All terrain' crane concept was first brought into the market. Depictions of cranes getting into impossible situations, misled some into believing that such cranes could negotiate terrain that was not realistic, resulting in damage to the crane and property.

The efforts by you and your journal to highlight this problem with outrigger mats are to be encouraged, but I would respectfully add that this message be taken on board by the marketing departments of equipment manufacturers, so that they can play their part in this important issue too.

I realise that to some, this may be contentious, nevertheless I believe it should be acknowledged and if we are serious about reducing overturning incidents this also needs to be considered.

Best Regards

Bill McLuckie, Lifting Engineer

Hunterston 'A' Site, Magnox North.

Ayrshire

Dear Sir,

The Government has taken considerable flack for its plans to reduce HSE funding, but the construction industry is strongly advised against using this as an excuse for rising accident and death rates. After all, this is an industry wide responsibility.

Maybe - and I stress it's only a maybe - the cuts will result in fewer or less rigorous on-site HSE checks, but that shouldn't give the green light for contractors to begin dropping standards. It's a false economy to do so and will do nothing to reduce the time and money attributed to accidents and employee or equipment down time.

There's a real danger of complacency slipping in and that could be the biggest part of the proposed spending cut fallout. Contractors need to realise that regulations and compliance is one thing but to stop there, at the minimum requirement, rarely adds any value to the business.

Appropriate health and safety systems and a rigorous approach to equipment status management is proven to reduce maintenance costs, improve the likelihood of tendering success and also enhances business reputation.

At a time when on-site death rates are spiralling, de-skilling and recruitment is an issue, health and safety best practice has never been more important.

Those firms who think they can cut corners and avoid the HSE - at a time when it is vulnerable - are only cheating themselves, the business and its employees.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Edwin

Business Manager, Scafftag

Dear Sir,

I too run several Ruthmanns in my fleet, and have to agree that these machines are excellent - we have local councils crying out for our TB220's. Our current fleet includes a Bronto 440x, Wumag WT370, Bronto 34m, Ruthmann T310, two Ruthmann TK270's and two Ruthmann TB220's and more than 400 various scissor lifts and self propelled booms. I find that all too often plant hire is not highlighted enough in Scotland.

Name not provided (or.. hate to say it ...misplaced?)

Leigh,

We have just had a customer come in to our showroom telling us about stupid videos on youtube, specifically relating to "how not to use a machine" and 'jumping from cherry pickers'.

After checking video clip, it just shows the kind of morons we have in our industry.

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=y>

Is there any way that we as an industry can lobby to prevent such thing being put on these kind of websites, as it is bound to encourage even more brain-dead muppets from following suit.

Thankfully, my customer thought the videos were stupid and even more thankfully, the machine wasn't ours!

Regards,

Jim Longstaff

Managing director

Clements Plant & Tool Hire, Coventry, UK