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New standard includes stabiliser interlocks

The 29th December 2009 will see the implementation of the new EU Machinery Directive. The revision of this Directive means that all related European standards have also had to be revised in order to conform and this includes EN12999, which covers the requirements for Loader Cranes. As a leading authority on loader cranes, ALLMI has representatives heavily involved with this revision. Bryan Flintham of Terex Atlas and

John Penny of Penny Hydraulics represent ALLMI on the BSI Crane Committee - MHE3, and CEN Working Group - WGP8.

What's it all about?

Explaining the process of revising the standard in line with the Directive Flintham says: "The changes are required to harmonise the standard with the new Machinery Directive. Following a harmonised standard in its entirety offers manufacturers a means to demonstrate conformity of their product with the essential health and safety requirements of the Directive, allowing them to sell their product throughout the EU. Standards are reviewed regularly by CEN through its member bodies (BSI in the UK, DIN in Germany, AFNOR in France and so on) and when amendments are found to be



necessary, a working group of experts is convened and tasked with drafting the revision. Once the draft is complete, it is circulated for a period of time for public comment. At this stage, anything goes. Comments can range from simple editorial tweaks to major technical changes. Once this consultation period ends, all comments received by the national standards bodies are reviewed and collated to form 'the national view'. The working group is then reconvened to discuss

the comments, which are either rejected, accepted, or accepted with amendments. Once the comments are cleared and consensus among the working group is reached, the standard goes back to CEN for a formal vote. Should it survive the formal vote, it will be added to the Official Journal and will be adopted by the member bodies as a national standard. prEN12999:2008 received in excess of 250 comments during its development"



Stabiliser interlocks

The amended loader crane standard is still at the draft stage, but at present, one of the most significant changes or additions planned for incorporation in the new standard is the requirement for stabiliser interlocks. The draft currently states that on loader cranes with a rated capacity of 1,000kg or more, or a with maximum net lifting moment of 40,000Nm and above, the stability of the vehicle will be incorporated into the safety function(s) of the Rated Capacity Limiter. This specifically means that the deployment of every stabiliser must be monitored by the Rated Capacity Limiter and the rated capacity reduced or the crane stopped if the stabiliser is not properly deployed this relates to the amount of beam extension along with the extension of the jacks. (Timber cranes will be exempt from this requirement).

The introduction of this safety system follows several years of discussion on the subject. ALLMI technical manager, Alan Johnson, comments: "Ever since the stabiliser interlocking issue first arose it has always been the stated wish of ALLMI to work with the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the correct arena to achieve these changes in a sustainable and reliable way. This has been the case. ALLMI and the HSE have been represented at these CEN meetings, together with representatives of other associations to get the standard to this stage."



The majority of loader crane accidents are stabiliser related.

Good operators have nothing to fear

But what will this new requirement mean for operators in terms of how loader cranes are used? Johnson continues: "It's nearly always the case that new safety devices meet with some market resistance both in terms of cost and complexity and 'user-friendliness'. In terms of user friendliness, any operator using their loader crane correctly, i.e. for its designed purpose and in the accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, should experience little or no difference in the operation of a crane and certainly no inconvenience. However, those operators who currently fail to use the crane stabilisers properly, either deliberately or otherwise, are likely to experience some issues, they will be obliged to set them up correctly and of course the standard has been developed to this level in order to protect them."



Operators who set the stabilisers according to the manufacturers instructions will notice no change.

Mixed feedback

Overall, the feedback received by ALLMI indicates that many, even the majority of operators will welcome any device that can help improve safety, while there are others who regard any such device as a burdensome interference and an unnecessary additional cost. Ultimately though, the issue has become part of the draft standard and reached this stage of the process as a result of the fact that the incorrect deployment of stabilisers has been a significant cause of accidents which have resulted in serious injury and fatalities.

Failing to address this issue is simply not an option.