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New guidance on remote controls installations and use

As a result of the recently revised Machinery Directive, ALLMI has provided guidance for its members on an issue concerning the use of remote controls.

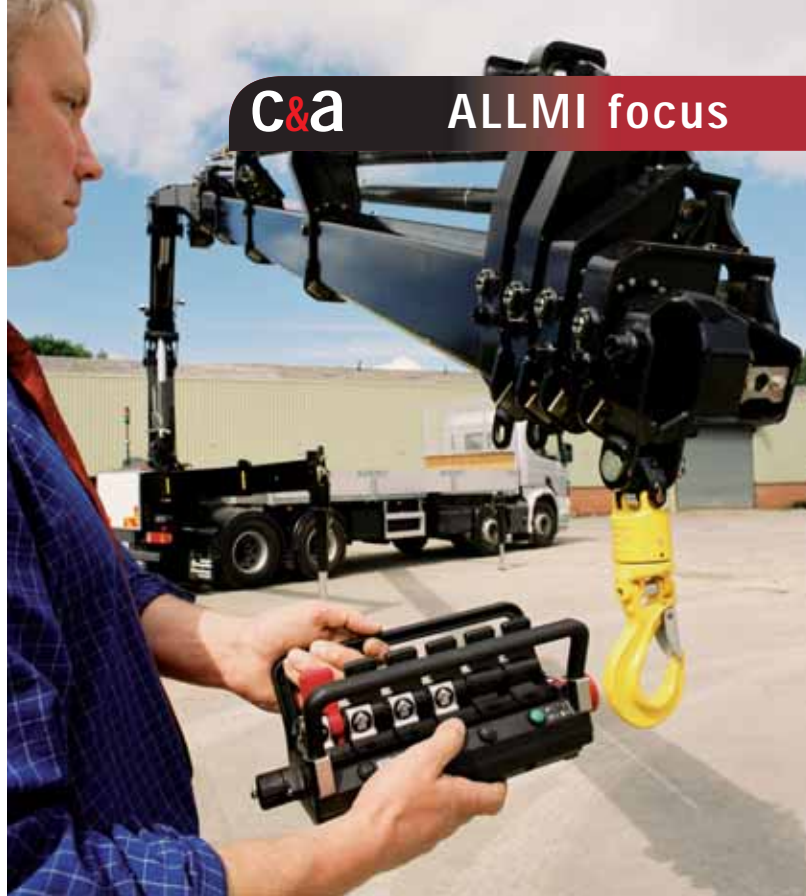
The Machinery Directive's Essential Health and Safety Requirement 1.2.1 'Safety & Reliability of Control Systems' requires installers to ensure that 'reasonably foreseeable human error does not lead to hazardous situations.' This is particularly relevant to remote controls as they are typically equipped with functions that can give rise to additional hazards, such as the provision for user defined switching, increasing and decreasing engine speed, and starting and stopping the engine.

- User defined switching capabilities are normally used either for direct control of electrical machinery, such as a winch; to divert hydraulic functionality to other equipment, such as ramps; or to switch on a function of the truck, such as engaging the PTO. It's important to recognise the hazards which may result from these actions and to implement control measures accordingly.
- Increasing the engine speed may result in too much flow being delivered to the loader crane unless the Engine Management System is capable of limiting the engine speed. Excess flow leads to overheating of the hydraulic system and so presents a significant risk to the operator and to the equipment. There have been many cases of injury and / or equipment damage resulting from overheating.
- Implementing the functionality to start and stop the engine may appear to be low risk with a loader crane powered by a donkey engine, but significant risks are present if the same functionality is

incorporated into a loader crane mounted on a truck. There has recently been an incident in Germany caused by the operator starting the truck engine from the remote control whilst the truck was in gear, resulting in the truck moving and seriously injuring a person by crushing them against a wall. A risk analysis would have highlighted this hazard and suitable control measures, such as interlocking with the transmission, could have been put in place.

It's therefore important that a risk analysis is undertaken before such options are implemented. Any measures taken to address issues such as those above should be recorded in the vehicle build file and where appropriate, clearly stated as parameters on the ALLMI Engine Management System Programming Request sheet sent to the truck dealer carrying out the PDI, in order to ensure clear audit trail.

For a full copy of the guidance note relating to this issue, please contact ALLMI.



Safety tips for the use of remote controls

- Always use in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always store the control unit in a suitable place when not in use.
- Always ensure the remote is de-activated when not in use.
- The operator must always be aware of the working area, including their proximity to the load and vehicle.
- Never walk whilst operating the remote control.
- Always use the belt / neck strap provided.
- Always check site rules to confirm that the use of a remote control is permitted.



Remotes allow the operator to work closely with the installation team

Remote systems on the increase

The extended reach and increased lifting capacity of today's loader cranes means remotes are more versatile than ever before. These developments in the equipment, together with increasingly complex lifting operations, mean that greater vigilance is required on the part of the operator, and the use of remotes can play a major role in enabling duties to be performed in a safer, more efficient manner; allowing control of the loader crane from greater distances, providing the operator with a better view of the working area and allowing them to stay in safe visual contact with the load (often negating the need for a signaller). Because of this, and with the developments in technology leading to increasingly sophisticated radio remote systems, it's easy to understand why operators are opting for remote controls when purchasing loader cranes. In fact, their use has increased significantly over recent years; in 2004, only 10 percent of new loader cranes were remote controlled, but that figure rose to over 40 percent in 2009.

EN12999 A3 update



As reported in the previous issue of ALLMI Focus, CEN Members had until 15th March to raise any objections relating to the latest changes to the European Standard for loader cranes, which followed an appeal from the Italian Standards Body, UNI. No objections were received and so WG8 members now have until 7th May to take part in a correspondence vote for the approval of the draft Standard.