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Crane Interest Group meeting

The September open meeting of the UK's CPA Crane Interest Group is the main meeting of two held each year. The well-attended gathering this year was once again at the Nuthurst Grange Hotel in Hockley Heath, West Midlands and was the first chaired by Ainscough managing director Neil Partridge. As usual a number of significant issues were covered and the following are those that will affect all crane companies in the UK.



Neil Partridge

In his first open meeting chairman Neil Partridge set the scene that is all too familiar with the crane rental companies, manufacturers and external consultants with his interpretation of the letters CPA.

"I always thought it was the Construction Plant hire Association," began Partridge, "however I now realise that it stands for the Chronic Profit Association!"

In his brief introduction he said that the industry is in the 'eye of the storm' and may remain there for some time. His own business - the largest crane rental company in the UK by some distance - posted revenues to May 2010 down £19 million and he said that "many others are down 25 to 30 percent, which was absolutely chronic".

Although there had been seven or eight crane company casualties to date, he said that it was going to be a hard for the rest of this year and probably the whole of 2011, not helped by public sector cuts and difficulty in obtaining money from banks.

Despite or because of the economy it was a lively meeting covering many interesting topics – some that will have a big impact on the crane industry over the coming months and years.

Although not on the agenda, Partridge made several comments about the looming problem of working hours which he thought would be one of the major factors that had not yet registered on most company's radar.

Thorough examination

Tim Watson reviewed the best practice guide for the 'Maintenance, Inspection and Thorough Examination of Mobile Cranes' launched at Vertikal Days earlier this year. The BPG aims to clarify the practical elements of maintenance, inspection and thorough examination of mobile cranes because of the potential for fatalities both when the crane is working and when it is travelling on the road. He said that it is hoped that companies will now follow the guide and examination in preference to the four year overload test which dates back to 1961 and requires a 25 percent overload which many (particularly the manufacturers) say is detrimental to the crane structure.

Watson emphasised that breakdown maintenance was insufficient and that companies must carry out planned preventative maintenance for the whole crane including the chassis.

One of the new additions within the guide is the concept of the defined scope of thorough examination which



takes generic elements for a particular crane plus specifics – manufacturers information, historical use, maintenance repair and history, thorough examination history, and future use – to tailor a scope of thorough examination for the specific crane, resulting in a more thorough, 'thorough examination' and it is this that obsoletes the four year test.

Major clients - particularly in the petro-chemical industry – have a problem with this new approach, so the CPA is planning a road show to major crane users, including the UK Contractors Group (previously the MCG) and the petrochemical industry to explain the benefits of Thorough Examination.

The CPA will also produce a 'declaration of compliance' document so that crane owners can now declare that they follow the defined scope of the examination process in lieu of the test.

problem with the four year testing in that several manufacturers do not allow the additional 25 percent loading and are uncomfortable with even a 10 percent overload and this is one of the main reasons behind the thorough examination. Crane structures are now more finely designed and less forgiving of overloads and I cannot see the benefit."

EN13000?

The 2010 version of EN13000 was published in May and has several new requirements including a set-up button in the cab to rig the crane in certain circumstances and a rated capacity limiter (RCL) over-ride switch situated outside the cab (which should be fitted on all cranes delivered after May 2010). These changes are being monitored in a survey being carried out by the European crane and heavy transport association ESTA with information being fed back to the EN13000 revision committee.



Many manufacturers do not allow overload tests and this is one of the main reasons behind the Thorough Examination.

Watson confirmed that the four year test can continue as an 'add-on' to the thorough examination regime. "Whatever you do, you have to be prepared when challenged or investigated," he said. "There is a

In the future outrigger spread will be monitored and linked into the RCL. Initially this will be wired into a warning device, rather than a cut-out function but it will be logged in the crane's data logger.



The influence of wind on a load is also being looked at particularly in relation to the wind turbine industry.

The influence of wind on a load is also being looked at particularly in relation to the wind turbine industry, due to the large area relatively light loads which can easily exceed the boom's side loading parameters.

Work at height on mobile cranes

A good deal of CPA work has gone into work at height on cranes. A joint working group has been set up which includes FEM, ESTA and the major petrochemical users such as



A set of common European 'working at height' requirements are being worked on

Shell and BASF with the aim to have common requirements throughout Europe.

Ainscough safety director John Lowton is carrying out a 'work at height' survey into the impact of the regulations on the crane industry. Any feedback (particularly first hand experience) would be useful for the survey and can be sent to Lowton at j.lowton@ainscough.co.uk.



John Lowton

High cycle lifting operations

The HSE letter (published in September's C&A) regarding a mobile crane accident in which its boom snapped from premature fatigue, was discussed. The subsequent investigation showed that the crane had carried out 117,000 similar lifts at or about the rated capacity of the crane. The HSE letter suggested that it was wrong to use mobile cranes for such repetitive cycle work, as they are not designed for it. Rental companies should therefore make sure that the customer is not using a mobile as a cheap harbour crane which also devalues the value of the asset.

Barry Barnes from Terex UK pointed out that this was the 10th such accident that he knew about over the past 33 years – many have been in Scotland and many working in harbour applications. He said that for this type of work, companies tend to buy older cranes and work them very hard. Other high-cycle applications include tunnelling work and skipping concrete where the boom, hoist rope and slew rings should be checked regularly.

With more cranes now being fitted with data-loggers potential purchasers can get a view of the cranes past use and then make a judgement on its value. One manufacturer is already looking into this when taking trade-ins.

Occupational health issues

Kevin Minton of the CPA talked about the 'fitness for work' of critical equipment operators. He said that principal contractors are increasingly requiring assurance

that all site operatives are fit to do the job and will not endanger others by causing a safety issue. Some contractors are already putting policies in place that require a medical certificate of fitness. The UKCG does not have a general policy on this yet, but is discussing it. Health issues which need to be checked include heart and lungs, blood pressure, diabetes, eyesight, hearing, gastro-intestinal and muscular/skeletal.

Crane rental companies will need to use a medical service provider to certify that its employees are fit to do the job. The CPA has set-up and is chairing a working group which plans to invite a variety of organisations and individuals - including contractors, the HSE and union representatives - to provide input in order to ensure a favourable outcome for CPA members over the long-term.

A number of delegates questioned whether this is indeed a problem that needs addressing. It was claimed though that contractor Costain has already introduced a requirement that everyone working with 'critical plant' must have a health certificate to get on site.

Research done on the cause of fatal accidents has shown that training, planning and equipment selection are the main factors in accidents and not the fitness of the operator. Geoffrey Marsh of Marsh Plant made the valid point that operator complacency and lack of concentration (particularly with the older and more experienced operators) is much more of a problem than ill-health. Many CPA members were in agreement that a five year medical test - along the lines of Heavy Goods Drivers – from the age of 45 would be a sensible way forward.

Although not on the agenda, Partridge raised the issue of working hours which he believes will have a major impact on the industry in the future. He also said that there is an obsession with Health & Safety in the UK and there needs to be a balanced, commonsense approach by all.

Diesel Particulate Filters

fitting of diesel particulate filters (DPFs) on the London Olympic Park which has finally reached a conclusion.

He said that the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) - which carried out an independent cost analysis study within the Olympic Park - has taken

the decision not to implement the requirement to retrofit DPFs to Non-Road Mobile Machinery.

In its study conclusions, the ODA said that: "the results of the study clearly demonstrate that the costs and benefits of DPFs do not represent good value for money when compared with other measures". As a result of the cost study, the ODA has taken the decision not to implement the requirement to retrofit DPFs, saying the results of the study clearly demonstrate that the costs and benefits of DPFs do not represent good value for money when compared with other measures. It does, however, still require all contractors to use Ultra Low Sulphur Diesel.

Lifting Equipment (Operator Daily checks)

There was some discussion over the fact that all lifting accessories



C&a crane interest group



A cutaway of a diesel particulate filter

used in a lift (and that come with the crane) must be visually checked (not thoroughly examined) by the crane operator before each lift.

Under Loler and 6(2) PUWER regulations, checks must be carried out. Accessories used on the lift must be visually checked by the crane operator for obvious damage. This check should not be left to the person in charge of the lift or be left to a six month inspection.

ISO crane hand signals

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has proposed a universal set of hand signals for use with cranes. The CPA says that these are confusing and would only work if everyone adopted them

and as a result is not encouraging their adoption.

Driver Certificate of Professional Competence

Crane drivers may still have to have 35 hours training over five years up to 2014. At the moment the Drivers Standards Agency says that crane drivers stopped after this time without CPC will be prosecuted. However the CPA is looking for an exemption for crane operators, given that road travel is not the main purpose of work for a crane. The CPA recommends members wait until more information is known and a clearer decision can be made.

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