

Dear Sir,

The following 'story' sums up my utter frustration at a situation which is being allowed to occur within the European Community, which requires urgent action from all of those involved in the industry before it is too late.

EUROLAND

Once upon a time there was a magical, mysterious place called Euroland – home of a new race of special people who lived in a wonderful state of unreality, overpaid, overfed and over there!

For many years, those of us in the access industry, which was relatively youthful when Euroland was created, felt that we wouldn't be noticed by the officials of Euroland but sadly, we were wrong! The 'Eurocrats', as they are now known, developed a wonderful sense of smell, which enabled them to 'sniff out' new business activities, which would then be infiltrated so that any sign of efficiency could be snuffed out before it could catch on in other industries and threaten their existence.

Such was their determination to infiltrate business at all levels that we soon found ourselves ruled by Directives and Standards designed to embrace every activity known to mankind – whether commercial or private – to such an extent that freedom of expression, in every meaning of the word, was soon tied up with regulations.

Our industry took some 24 years to complete both Directives and a specific Standard for cherry pickers, which, in Euroland, is rapid progress. Needless to say, cherry pickers had to be given an official Euroland acronym and became MEWPs, chosen, we think, from a directory of pond life but intended to stand for 'Mobile Elevating Work Platforms.'

This situation created a problem for all of those in the cherry picker industry because the Eurocrats had decreed that, when they finally published the Standards and Directives, all those States who had foolishly signed the treaty to create Euroland, accepted the condition that all Directives and Standards issued by Euroland, on behalf of the European Community, would apply in their countries.

To ensure that manufacturers who wished to sell their products into the European Community could do so, the Eurocrats gave the governments of each Member Country the duty of appointing Notified Bodies, who would satisfy themselves that machinery within certain specific categories of risk complied fully with the Directives and specific Standards and where that compliance was proven to the satisfaction of the Notified Body, an EC Type Examination Certificate, allowing the sale and use of that product throughout Euroland, would be issued.

On the face of it, a sensible arrangement which clarified the legality, throughout Euroland, of all machinery deemed by the Eurocrats to require certification by a Notified Body. It might be reasonable to assume that, with such a level playing field, there would be no problem for manufacturers to sell without let or hindrance throughout Euroland. That would, of course, be the case were it not for the cultural eccentricities displayed by some member countries.

Prior to the formation of Euroland, some European countries insisted on specific criteria for the design or working envelope of particular MEWPs, so that manufacturers around the world, exporting to these countries, were required to manufacture several versions of the same product in order to comply with the often conflicting requirements of different countries.

The purpose of the new certification process was to enable manufacturers to build their machines for all of Euroland to one European specification, which was acceptable to all the Member Countries. A sensible, workable plan one might think, but that, of course doesn't take into account the vagaries of the Italian Safety Inspectorate system which for years allowed individual inspectors to invent new safety rules at will. Nor does it take into account the tendency of the Dutch – who consider themselves vastly superior to other European nations - to produce extra 'red-tape' and irrelevant regulations.

These two countries have systematically ignored the validity of EC product certification and are now threatening the future of the CE certification process which has worked so well in the other 24 Member Countries of the European Community. The two countries concerned import fewer cherry pickers than many other European countries, which have had no trouble with the features which seem to cause so much concern in Italy and Holland.

This nonsense has prevailed for too long and is causing considerable damage and cost to importing dealers, purchasers of the product and of course, the manufacturers, all of whom have to pick up the bill for sorting out these continuous petty and troublesome queries on machines which have already been properly CE certificated by a large number of EC Notified Bodies. The only apparent motivation for all this is that a small number of people are creating problems in order to protect their jobs. Jobs which were created many decades before Euroland, and the Standards, Directives and CE certification, which have clearly produced a much safer working environment for all concerned.

So one has to ask why the Eurocrats have allowed this situation to continue in these two countries and when will they do something to stop the rot before it spreads and wrecks a system which clearly works?

Euroland has set the rules for the game and we have to ask the Eurocrats – if these rules are set in stone or sand?

Name withheld on request.

Good day Sir!

I am a safety officer in the construction industry in Singapore and I am a huge fan of your website Vertikal.net. I chanced upon the website last year and I was instantly star struck at the vast web of information available. During my weekly safety meetings, I would share printouts regarding accidents from your website.

I look forward to more interesting news!!!
God bless Vertikal.net!

Best Wishes,

Achmad Suhaimi

The following was the second part of a letter to us covering two subjects, the part below concerned the dropping of the high speed ferry Clann na nOileain in Galway Harbour in early April.

Dear Sir,

....On another note, regarding the images of the boat being lifted in Galway in Ireland that you have published, I was contacted by the shipping company to supply the lifting gear for this lift. We do not keep large SWL Polyester slings in stock for general lifting, and I advised them of this. I recommended using wire ropes with plenty of timber packing to protect the boat, and advised them that unless they had divers there to ensure that soft slings (if used) would be protected against sharp objects, that soft slings should be avoided.

As we now know, the advice wasn't taken. Two hours after the incident, I got a call from the same company asking for us to supply the wire slings, to which I declined.

It annoys me that practical advice that is meant for genuine reasons isn't taken seriously. The HSA put too much emphasis on the simple things like enforcing Hard Hats and Hi-Viz vests and ensuring all people entering site have been 'inducted' etc, yet the elephant in the room is avoided.

Name withheld for obvious reasons.

Dear Leigh,

Heartfelt congratulations on a decade devoted to creating a safe work environment through this electronic medium.

The Safety Department of Local 150 IUOE here in the Chicago area, has recommended Vertikal.Net countless times, not only in safety talks to our 22,000 apprentices and journeypersons but also to the supervision of the signatory contractors with whom we strive to safely build, mine, create and maintain. I am also aware of OSHA personnel here who tell me they are now regular visitors to your site.

By the way, your editorial comparing construction safety to safety in the airline industry is spot-on! Certifications such as IPAF and the OECF (OSHA recognized operator certification recommended by International Union of Operating Engineers in the U S) are a giant step in that direction. In fact we first became aware of IPAF through your electronic publication and now are looking forward to membership in IPAF, and offering AWPT certification at our training site in Wilmington, Illinois in the near future.

Though an ocean apart we stand shoulder to shoulder in an effort to see to it that those with whom we have contact have the information needed to safely perform their tasks and make it home at day's end healthy and whole.

Thanks again for your life saving efforts, and may they continue for countless decades to come.

John Rickert

The following is an open letter from Gordon Leicester to IPAF members regarding proposed changes to training courses for the IPAF PAL card which would further limit the numbers that can be trained by one trainer to four and restrict the course to a single category, such as scissor lift. The letter was sent out by email a few days prior to the recent IPAF Summit and council meeting.

Good Afternoon

With the next IPAF meeting fast approaching I write to express my concerns regarding the proposed changes to the IPAF training scheme.

The PAL card has seen considerable growth and market penetration over the last few years, however there is a real danger that the proposed changes to the number of candidates who can be trained in a day will result in price increases to the customer that could cause a dramatic decline in training across all sectors.

I fully appreciate that there needs to be an extension to the current course but this could be simply dealt with by extending the time of a current course to a "full day" and giving more time to the candidates.

The issue about more advanced training for large booms and scissors should also be dealt quite simply by creating an advanced operators course rather than trying to "re-invent the wheel" with the proposed site assessment course.

We as an industry are in danger of pricing ourselves out of the market if the proposed changes are implemented regarding the PAL card.

Regards

Gordon Leicester

Managing Director

Facelift

Dear Sir,

I thoroughly enjoyed the article One step at a time.... In the March issue of Cranes & Access which talked about the history of Kranlyft as well as the development of the spider crane which as you point out no one has done more to encourage than Mr Dijner and the folks at Kranlyft. I have only met this man once at a big exhibition where he was joining in with all the staff to talk to anyone who came along about how great his cranes are. My impression was that he was working much more than anyone else – not that I want you to think that they were being lazy or anything. The main point I wanted to say is that he seems like a real gentleman and I am even more pleased to say that our company now owns two of the Maeda cranes and we have been very happy with them. You often ask for people to say what we like to see and I would like to see more articles like this one with people like him who know what they are talking about and who can talk about the difficulties they had building up the business and such things. Keep up the good work.

Ernesto Maldini

Mr Maldini did not say which company he works for, his letter had a Swiss postage stamp so we assume that he therefore works for a Swiss crane company. Regardless we very much appreciate the letter.



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