

HSE safety alert - luffing jib cranes in high winds

Following a number of recent collapses of luffing jib tower cranes in high winds, the UK Health & Safety Executive issued a safety bulletin to remind duty holders that when tower cranes are left unattended, they must be in the correct configuration to withstand wind loadings.

If luffing jib cranes are left out of service with the slew brake engaged and/or the jib parked at too small a radius, there is a possibility that the crane may not be able to weathervane freely in high winds. This could result in very high loadings being placed on the crane with the consequential collapse of the jib or the whole crane. This normally means that luffing jib

cranes must be in free slew with the jib at a safe out-of-service radius.

However, there are some occasions where it is desirable to lock the slew out-of-service with the manufacturer's agreement. This requires the manufacturer to check the strength of the tower in this situation and provide recalculated, updated foundation loads for the



One of several recent luffing tower crane collapses in London

base design. Principal contractors have primary responsibility on site, and they must liaise with subcontractors, crane owners and crane operators to ensure that when left unattended in the out-of-service condition, all tower cranes must be configured correctly to withstand

wind loadings.

Investigations are still ongoing into recent collapses, and the HSE is working with TCIG, CPA and others on ensuring that guidance is up to date and available and to follow up on other actions that the industry could take.

Competence to operate

A new UK Strategic Forum Plant Safety Group guidance document "Competence to Operate Construction Plant" has been published by the CPA. The new document aims to clarify methods for employers to manage, develop and record employees' competence to operate all types of equipment.

The guidance covers management of training and management of experience as well as management of competence. Mobile construction equipment has the potential to cause fatalities and serious injury. Consequently it is essential that people who operate it are competent to do so. The duty to ensure that operators are competent rests with their employer and the process of ensuring competence requires cooperation between employers, training providers and operators, all of whom have a significant part to

play in the process.

Many organisations see training and possession of a card as a proxy for competence; this is a dangerous assumption. It may indicate a general level of ability to operate specific equipment, but does not take into account the difficulty of the task, the complexity of the environment or the experience of the operator. These all have a bearing on the successful management of the task.

The document clarifies methods for employers to manage, develop and record their employees' competences and meet their duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act, PUWER (Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations) and CDM - the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.

Achieving the necessary competence to carry out a particular task is set out as a four stage process: Selection, Training and Assessment, Developing Competence and the final stage, Life Long Learning. Each of these stages is explained in detail in the document.

Heather Bryant, HM chief inspector of construction and chairman of

the Health & Safety Executive's Construction Industry Advisory Committee (CONIAC), said: "The advice in this document is straightforward, comprehensive and easy to adopt. It has been prepared by industry representatives to demonstrate realistic means of complying with legal duties. However, following the guidance is not compulsory and may go further than the minimum you need to do in order to comply with the law. I thank those who have been involved in its preparation and commend the guidance to anyone who employs people who work with construction plant and those with an interest in such matters."

CPA director Kevin Minton adds: "The new guidance was written to help promote understanding and sharing knowledge in an area which is often seen as difficult to discuss.



I thank those industry bodies and individuals that were involved in its preparation - the strength of the guidance is founded on their experience and cooperative input."

"Competence to Operate Construction Plant" is available for free download from the CPA website at <http://cpa.uk.net/sfpsg/#Competence>

For further information on the Construction Plant-hire Association, contact Kevin Minton, CPA Director on 020 7796 3366

