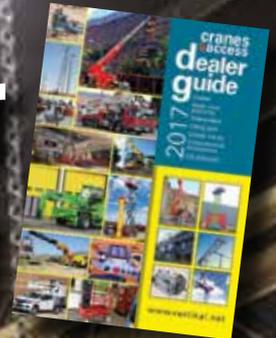


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July 2017 Vol.19 issue 5

Dealer
guide



Industrial lifts
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Small AT
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On the cover:

A Skyjack SJ16 with short traversing deck being used to carry out maintenance on an overhead crane.



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Editorial team

Mark Darwin - Editor
editor@vertikal.net

Associate editors

Rüdiger Kopf (Freiburg)
Alexander Ochs (Freiburg)
Leigh Sparrow

Reporter

Sam Pickering

Sales & customer support

Pam Penny
Clare Engelke
Karlheinz Kopp

Production/Administration

Nicole Engesser

Subscriptions

Lee Sparrow

Publisher

Leigh Sparrow

Advertising sales

UK-based

Pam Penny pp@vertikal.net
Tel: +44 (0)7917 155657
Clare Engelke ce@vertikal.net
Tel: +44 (0)7989 970862

Germany-based

Karlheinz Kopp khk@vertikal.net
Tel: +49 (0)761 89786615

Italy

Fabio Potestà,
Mediapoint,
Corte Lambruschini,
Corso Buenos Aires 8, V Piano-Interno 7,
I-16129 Genova, Italy
Tel: 010 570 4948 Fax: 010 553 0088
email: mediapointsrl.it

The Vertikal Press

PO box 6998 Brackley NN13 5WY, UK
Tel: +44(0)8448 155900
Fax: +44(0)1295 768223
email: info@vertikal.net
web: www.vertikal.net

Vertikal Verlag

Sundgaullee 15, D-79114,
Freiburg, Germany
Tel: 0761 8978660 Fax: 0761 8866814
email: info@vertikal.net
web: www.vertikal.net



Conspicuous by their absence

Two things immediately struck me as I watched media coverage of the horrific Grenfell Tower fire in London, in the early hours of Wednesday 14th July, some five hours or so after London Fire Brigade was alerted - cladding shouldn't burn like that and where were the large aerial lifts to extinguish the fire and rescue those trapped on upper floors?

This disaster was no accident - it was a combination of 'errors' that unfortunately resulted in the perfect storm. Without getting into the politics of the tragedy - which will no doubt be covered in-depth as the inquiry progresses - there are several areas that need serious and immediate scrutiny, such as why London's largest fire rescue platform was only 32 metres - Grenfell Tower is 67 metres.

This height deficiency was flagged up several years ago after a fire at another block. That inquiry even named a manufacturer of large truck mounted platforms that could supply them. None were ordered.

At Grenfell it took hours to get a 42 metre platform from the Surrey Fire Brigade, giving additional, but nowhere near enough height. London appears to have fewer than 10 of the 32 metre aerial ladder platforms. But this problem is not just confined to fires in tower blocks, it applies to anyone needing help or rescue when more than 40 metres/15 storeys above ground, including tower crane operators.

The annoying thing is that the UK access rental industry has at least 50 truck mounted platforms capable of reaching the top of Grenfell Tower or higher, but none were called for during the fire. With many residents driven to the upper floors by the fire, the final death-toll might have been so much lower if they had been deployed.

But what can be done?

Our letters section includes posts from current and past IPAF chief executives Tim Whiteman and Paul Adorian. Whiteman's letter to mayor of London Sadiq Khan asks whether the higher truck mounted platforms owned by IPAF members might be made available to fire crews to rescue people trapped in high rise buildings. True there are issues around the design and intended use of existing equipment, but many are open and willing to see if their platforms could be adapted for fire rescue applications.

Paul Adorian's letter on the other hand points out how seriously under-equipped London is and how with the right equipment the outcome of the fire might have been totally different.

We assume that our local fire department has access to the equipment to deal with such incidents, but as this disaster shows, they do not.

Several manufacturers supply large platforms designed for fire fighting. It is simply down to the politics or funding issues as to whether they are purchased or not. Inquiry recommendations are sometimes followed, sometimes not. Let us hope that in the time this one takes, there is not another disaster where the same questions are asked.

Mark Darwin

Comment and feedback is most welcome via post, email, fax or phone stating if we may publish them or not: editor@vertikal.net

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