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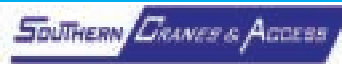
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Advances in remote control technology have permitted the control of loader cranes from much greater distances allowing the operator to remain in safe visual contact with the load.

applications require remote control and, in fact, there are several environments where the use of radio controlled equipment is not permitted, such as in hospitals for example. However, most radio-controlled loader cranes have the option of a cable connection and they always retain the traditional manual controls.

So is there a 'downside'? The answer to this lies with the training of the operator. The technology is sound, of that there is no doubt, but, as with any piece of equipment, there is always room for human error. For example, with a radio remote control system the operator is free to move anywhere he likes, even under the load! Obviously this kind of situation should never occur, but may well do if the correct training hasn't been given.

ALLMI Training Ltd recognises the need for training, which is specific to remote control systems and, as such, has a separate licensing category for the use of radio remotes. It is the only accreditation scheme in the UK to recognise this.

other radio remote systems operating in close proximity.

Remote control systems can also protect the operator against unintended operations through the crane's own lever controls. There are systems available that constantly monitor the lever positions and will stop the crane immediately if the manual levers are operated at the same time as the remote control. This makes it impossible for the crane to be tampered with, or, moved in any way whilst the remote control is activated.

So, if using radio remote control has so many advantages, why is it not fitted to every new crane? Well, it obviously comes at a price. But, like most things electronic, the price is dropping. The take-up of remote controls in the UK, however, is still relatively slow compared to its European neighbours.

In Sweden, approximately 80 percent of new knuckle boom cranes are supplied with radio remote control systems, whereas in the UK this figure is less than 10 percent, although it is growing. The additional cost for such a system is in the order of 4 to 6 percent of the cost of the new vehicle cost (of a lorry loader), but it is easily recovered due to the improvement in efficiency obtained.

Obviously, not all loader crane

from a distance

The extended reach and increased lifting capacity of today's loader cranes means that they are more versatile than ever before. But, these benefits have not come without additional demands for operators. Here we take a look at the value of remote controls.

As the lifting operations, as well as the technology, of loader cranes become increasingly complex, greater vigilance is required on the part of the operator. The use of remote control systems with loader cranes though can play a major part in enabling the operator to carry out his/her duties in a safe and efficient manner.

Remote controls for loader cranes have been available for many years, but early versions were connected to the crane by a cable. These systems provided a significant improvement in flexibility for the loader crane, but the cables were subject to damage and naturally had a finite length, thereby restricting the range over which the controls could be used.

More recently, the 'wireless' or 'radio' remote control has become a widely available option on knuckle boom cranes (in fact, with certain models it now comes as standard). With the developments in digital technology, radio remote control systems have become extremely sophisticated, enabling major steps forward in the safety and efficiency of loader crane operations.

These advances in technology permit the control of loader cranes from much greater distances, provide the operator with a better view of the working area and allow him/her to remain in safe visual contact with the load. This often negates the need for a banksman and allows more accurate positioning of the load. The operator's ability to be closer to the load also allows him/her to work more efficiently if hooking or slinging is required.

Add this to the fact that the operator can now remove him/herself from noise and exhaust pollution associated with traditional control positions and also the improved safety of the new operating location, and it is easy to understand why an increasing number of end users are opting for remote control systems when purchasing loader cranes.

The technology

With customers driving demand, manufacturers are responding with impressive developments. Radio remote control systems can now incorporate many specialist features. A selection of different working speeds for the crane can be offered enabling specific adjustments to suit the operating situation, while integrated display panels give the operator continuous information about the load condition of the crane. Pre-programmed frequencies allow all frequency ranges to be checked simultaneously when the remote system is activated. An available frequency is selected automatically, thus preventing interference from



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