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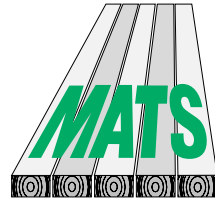
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Sales 50 per cent up at Terex

TEREX CORPORATION in the US has announced a 50 per cent jump in revenues for the nine months to 30 September, 2003. This equates to US\$2.8 billion (UK£1.6 billion), compared with a figure of \$1.8 billion ((£1.08 billion) reported in the corresponding period of 2002. Terex said that this is largely due to its prior acquisitions of Demag and Genie.

Terex Cranes saw its sales for the nine months increase by over 66 per cent to \$737 million (£434 million), from \$443 million (£261 million) 12 months earlier. This was due to the full-year effect of the Demag acquisition.

Gross profit for cranes rose by 39 per cent to \$85 million (£50 million), while SG&A doubled, reflecting the different approach of the Demag crane business to that of Terex Cranes. As a result of the lower gross margin percentage and higher SG&A, the Group's operating income fell by over 20 per cent to \$25 million (£14.7 million) for the nine months.

Sales of Terex Aerial Work Platforms for the nine months, now represented almost entirely by Genie, were \$451.3 million (£265.8 million) compared to only \$47.6 million (£28.5 million) in 2002.

Gross profit for platforms was \$96.7 million (£57 million), over 21 per cent of revenues. SG&A was \$42.2 million (£24.9 million), or 9.4 per cent, giving an operating income for the nine months of \$54.5 million (£32 million), a healthy 12 per cent.

"We are pleased with our execution so far this year," said Ron Defeo, chairman and CEO at Terex. "We began the year with a lot of uncertainty. We recognized that an end market recovery was unlikely, but at the same time we believed that Terex was in a good position to change and improve. We have made progress and our internal focus has been paying dividends, as we have generated over \$278 million in cash from operations over the last 12 months." ■

Vertikal Comment:

Are Genie now the world market leader? See JLG results page 9.



MORE THAN 1200 members of the global crane community dropped in on Terex-Demag recently at its Dinglerstasse and Wallerscheid production facilities in Germany. Among the crane's on show were Demag's new six-axle AC 200-1 P and seven-axle AC 200-1 TP variants of the 200 tonne capacity AC 200-1, of which 53 units have been sold since June this year. The seventh axle on the AC 200-1 TP is a removable "tag" axle which can fully integrated into the unit's braking and steering systems. The additional axles have been included to meet transportation regulations in mainland Europe, allowing each version to carry more weight when in transit.

Pinguely-Haulotte buys into French rental industry

PINGUELY-HAULOTTE has signed an acquisition agreement for LEV, the access rental arm of France-based truck rental company Fraikin. The sale of LEV follows the acquisition of Fraikin (from Iveco-Fiat) in January of this year by Eurazeo, France's largest publicly held private equity investor, in partnership with Pragma-Capital and UI (Credit Agricole), for a disclosed sum of €805 million (UK£560 million).

LEV currently owns approximately 1,500 machines, a 180-strong workforce and 30 rental locations spread throughout France, which for the last 20 years has constituted one of the country's major platform rental networks. 2002 saw LEV generate a revenue of €22.3 million (£15.54 million).

Haulotte hopes that the LEV acquisition will enable the expansion of its products and services throughout France, and ultimately bring the company closer to the end user market.

All future operations under Haulotte will have the full support of LEV's existing management structure, including Bernard Pointet, LEV's president and general manager. ■

Full news story on www.Vertikal.net.

Turn to page 16 for the full interview with Haulotte president Pierre Saubot.



Crawler collapse on Southend job site

A SUMITOMO SC350 crawler crane, similar to the one pictured, on hire from Wharton Plant Hire collapsed on a Southend-on-Sea job site in Essex, UK last week causing damages of up to £200,000.

The jib of the 35 tonne capacity machine complete with load crumpled to the ground after the crane's winch was accidentally left on creep mode, causing the jib to arch over the crane's cab and eventually collapse to the ground to the rear of the crane. No-one was hurt in the accident.

The Health and Safety Executive is waiting for a report from the main contractor on the project, Fitzpatrick, who is in turn awaiting a report from the subcontractor that was responsible for the crane's operation. The crane's owner Wharton Plant Hire declined to comment on the incident. ■

Demag open day

Guests were alerted to the upgraded version of the 500 tonne AC 500-1, the AC 500-2 SSL, which has been specially developed to meet the growing European demand for wind turbine erection. The unit features an optimised superstructure and boom system that gives an increase in lift capacity of up to 30 per cent than its AC 500-1 predecessor, allowing a wind turbine to set up entirely by the unit's luffing jib.

Another attention grabber was the European 70 tonne, IHI CC 280, fresh from Japan and decked out in the traditional cream and red livery of the host company. Also on the crawler front were the new CC 2000-1, complete with a new ballast wagon extender, and CC 2200, with respective lift capacities of 300 and 350 tonnes. Both units are based on the earlier 300 tonne capacity CC 1800-1, but feature new stronger boom systems, a telescopic frame superlift option and Demag's new "IC-1" crane control system.

Preparations are also fully underway for the relocation of production of the Peiner SK tower crane range which was previously produced 100 kilometres north of Zweibruecken in Trier. Operations to produce the 315, 415 and 575 towers and the 212 and 213 tower sections are scheduled for an early 2004 start at the Dinglerstasse facility.

The five-day event was one of the first public showings of the newly-founded relationship between the host company and its new sister company, Genie Industries, which also presented a selection from its access equipment portfolio. Terex said that it sold more than 30 new and used cranes at the event. ■



Autogru PM acquires Oil & Steel

ITALY-BASED knuckle boom manufacturer Autogru PM has acquired 100 per cent of the capital of aerial platform manufacturer Oil & Steel. The purchase was made through Autogru PM by BS Private Equity which, along with its current managing director Marco Milesi, was involved in a management buy-in to Autogru PM back in May 2002. The founders of Oil & Steel have underwritten an increase in the capital of Autogru PM as part of the transaction.

The Oil & Steel acquisition gives the combined group a turnover of €85 million (£60 million) and the merged company will be controlled jointly by Milesi and the founders of Oil & Steel, P Balugani, F Flisi, M Piantoni and R Valentini, who all retain their roles within the company.

"From a commercial point of view, the two companies (Autogru PM and Oil & Steel) will be independent, in order to increase their market share in their respective fields," said Milesi. "The operation will enable the partners of Oil & Steel to continue the work began in 1995, and also return to the field of hydraulic cranes for trucks."

Autogru PM now claims to be the world's fourth largest manufacturer of hydraulic knuckle boom cranes with a turnover of €55million (£38.79 million) and exporting approximately 60 per cent of its production to more than 50 countries worldwide.

Meanwhile in the UK, Arborplant, recently supplied six Oil & Steel Octopussy tracked mobile units to Scottish Power (SP systems). The order comprises five,1250 two-man basket units and one, 1465 one-man basket unit. All units are 5 metre outreach, 10.5 metre working height machines. ■

Full news story on www.Vertikal.net.

Ainscough opens London depot

AINSCOUGH CRANE Hire has opened a new crane hire centre in London to boost customer service levels in the south of England. The London Hire Centre will process all hire calls, which will then be distributed to one of Ainscough's other southern depots in either Beckton, Hayes, Heathrow or Hendon, which will then supply the cranes.

Ainscough managing director Martin Ainscough said that the new London Hire Centre will mirror the company's National Hire Centre operation based in Wigan. "Although we have closed our Erith depot, we now have four prime locations within the M25 and over 150 cranes with a lifting capacity of up to 500 tonnes," he said. "These depots will also be supported by a further 100 cranes based at our Maidstone, Southampton and Fawley depots that will continue to operate independently." ■

HSE prosecutes and condemns UK construction industry

TWO LONDON-based companies have been fined a total of £100,000 at the Old Bailey following a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecution into the death of 26 year-old David Mott who fell through false ceiling tiles while dismantling mobile platforms at Exhibition Hall 1 at Earls Court, London.

The prosecution followed an HSE investigation into the incident in which Mr Mott fell 35 metres to his death on 23 June 2000 at Earls Court, Warwick Road, London. Six months prior to the death of Mr Mott, another worker was killed in a similar incident, for which Earls Court Ltd was fined £70,000 in a prosecution taken by the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Both companies had earlier pleaded guilty to breaching Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA), which requires employers to ensure that persons not in their employment are not exposed to risks to their health or safety.

The judgement comes after the recent denouncing of the UK construction industry by HSE chiefs for its failure to raise the standards of work at height following the second national construction falls from height blitz in September. HSE inspectors served 332 prohibition and 82 improvement notices after visiting almost 1500 sites around the UK, while thirteen potential prosecutions are today being considered as a result of the inspections.

Chief Inspector for Construction at the HSE, Kevin Myers, subsequently condemned the industry for the evident lack of improvement in work at height safety. "Since the beginning of April this year 17 construction workers have died due to falling from height and it remains the single biggest killer in this industry," said Myers. "What inspectors found during the second blitz suggests that a large section of the industry is not improving itself, as it claims. Many in the industry are deliberately cutting corners, paying lip service to safety and risking the lives of their workers." ■

Full news story on www.Vertikal.net.

Crane giants in court battle

TEREX CRANES has filed a patent infringement action against Liebherr's German mobile and crawler crane production operation, Liebherr Ehingen. The filing was lodged at the patent division of the Mannheim district court in Germany, where on 6 February 2004 a preliminary hearing will be held to decide whether there is a case to answer. Terex has said that Grove may be next in line.

The believed infringement focuses on Liebherr's 'Y-guy' boom support system, which the company launched at the end of 2001 as a rival product to Terex's Sideways Superlift (SSL) technology. Terex's Demag subsidiary developed and secured a patent for its SSL system 12 months prior to the introduction of the Liebherr system.

Terex Demag's SSL system is an attachment for telescopic booms which increases a crane's lifting capacity, particularly when lifting with the boom in near vertical position at a low radius. Like the Terex Demag technology, Liebherr's 'Y-guy' system provides lateral support to telescopic booms, again enhancing lift capacities when the boom is in a near vertical position.

The Intermat exhibition held in Paris back in May also saw Grove showcase a similar lateral boom strengthening attachment, dubbed Mega Wing-Lift, on a 450 tonne capacity GMK 7450 all terrain crane. Terex said that it may also take action against Grove's Mega Wing-Lift system, which it believes is also an infringement on its SSL system.

Liebherr Ehingen said that it does not believe that Terex should have been awarded the patent for such a system and that it will contest the filing. ■

Revenue down but profits rise at JLG

THE 2003 fiscal year saw a drop in JLG's sales to US\$760 million (UK£455.69 million) from \$770 million (£461.69 million) reported in 2002. Despite the fall, income was up from \$12.9 million (£7.73 million) to \$14.2 million (£8.51 million) during the corresponding periods, while operating profit also increased from \$30.7 million (£18.41 million) to \$39.2 million (£23.5 million).

For the 4th quarter period of 2003, Jim Woodward, executive president at JLG, said that revenues were 3 per cent lower than in the same period of 2002, reflecting a \$17 million (£10.19 million), or 7 per cent drop in sales of new aerial work platforms. Total sales dropped from \$249 million (£149.30 million) to \$242.2 million (£145.22 million) over the corresponding periods.

Woodward said that the drop was mainly attributable to Europe where sales decreased by 18 per cent, or \$10.3 million (£6.18 million), compared with last year and that large amounts of relatively young equipment entered onto the market has depressed new equipment sales.

According to JLG's CEO Bill Laskey, 2003 was one of the most challenging years in the company's history. JLG's full year financial results show that its aerial platform sales decreased by 9 per cent, or \$54.8 million (£32.86 million) to \$435 million (£261.7 million) in 2003, which Woodward said was mainly due to 37 per cent decline in the company's scissor lift sales. Hopes have been placed on the introduction of the new pro-fit scissor line to reverse this trend. The significant drop in scissor sales was, however, offset by a \$32.1 million (£19.25 million) increase in telehandler sales to \$119.5 million (£71.9 million). Total sales for Europe were down by 14 per cent, or \$23 million (£13.79 million) in 2003, and by \$4.2 million (£2.52 million) in North America. Increases were seen in Australia, the Pacific Basin and Latin America, but these represented relatively small sales.

Laskey said that while there is evidence of a growth in manufacturing capacity in the US and that there are signs of improving utilisation and rental rates, specifically for telehandlers in the non-residential construction sectors, many of the more significant companies in Europe still face severe economic conditions and there is as yet, no recovery in sight.

Full news story on www.Vertikal.net.

VERTIKAL COMMENT: With the announcement of lower aerial lift revenues at JLG falling to \$435 million, and Terex-Genie's nine months sales reported as \$451.3 million, it would seem that Genie might have taken over the position of market leader in the aerial work platform market in 2003.



Grove quartet for Bryn Thomas

BRYN THOMAS Crane Hire of Flint, North Wales has taken delivery of four new Grove GMK all-terrain cranes, taking the firms crane fleet up to 32 units. The order included a 100 tonne capacity GMK5100, two 50 tonne capacity GMK3050s, taking the firm's tally to four, and a 35 tonne GMK2035. Bryn Thomas now operates eight GMK cranes, including the UK's first 100 tonne GMK5100, which was delivered to the company back in 2000.

Since 2000, Grove has delivered nearly 400 GMK 5100s from Manitowoc Crane Group's Wilhelmshaven facility in Germany, and is now one of the company's most popular models alongside the 50 tonne capacity GMK3050.

Bryn Thomas also commented that several new contracts recently awarded to the company in connection with the electrification of the national main-line rail network to the company means that investment in additional larger capacity cranes is highly probable. ■

Menzies leaves UpRight

UPRIGHT HAS announced the surprise departure of Ian Menzies, its president and chief executive officer.

Menzies successfully lead the North American business of UpRight through Chapter 11 process from which it emerged in September 2002. Since then UpRight has faced sluggish demand in the North American market and production delays; delivery times on some of its most popular models have been seriously extended.

Menzies has been replaced by John Coughlan (pictured) who will be based in Ireland and is the fourth CEO of UpRight since the departure of David Sargent in 1998. Rick Stowe, chairman of the ultimate parent company Griffin said: "John Coughlan will lead a global management team that will support both the North American and European operations.

In an interview with C&A, Coughlan said that he believes that the access industry is at the bottom of a retrenchment cycle and on the point of an upturn. "Timing is everything," he said. "A new truly global corporate structure will ensure that UpRight moves back to being a single worldwide business rather than two separate businesses joined by a common name. With one part of the business going through the Chapter 11 process it was almost

inevitable that the company would show divisions."


When asked what he plans to do about UpRight's poor reputation in the recent past for parts deliveries, Coughlan said that actions have already been taken and that September was the best month in four years for volume of parts shipments and availability. "With that trend continuing during October, we will soon be more than meeting expectations. On the production side and lead times, our new global team is already focusing on this area.

I cannot promise that it will change overnight, ...but it will change."

Coughlan, who sees himself as an "engineer-marketeer" stressed that UpRight will become a more customer focussed company from top to bottom. "We want to be number one to our customers" he said. ■



Visit www.Vertikal.net for the full interview with John Coughlan



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Ruthmann goes compact

GERMANY-BASED aerial platform producer Ruthmann has said that its new Steiger TB 180 has been launched as an alternative to the costly and time consuming use of scaffold systems for short duration jobs. The company describes the unit as a slightly modified version of the larger 22 metre working height TB 220, offering a lateral outreach of up to 12.8 metres and an 18 metre working height.

Features include an automatic self-levelling system and an optional memory function which enables the machine to return to the last set up position, while an automatic return system brings all of the unit's functions back to its original transportable position, all at the push of a button. A cage levelling system also ensures that the 1.4 metre by 0.7 metre cage is always kept in a true horizontal position. If desired, the TB 180 can be mounted on a heavier 4.6 tonne truck chassis and can be driven on a Euro B driving licence. ■

“Thank-you”



TIM WHITEMAN, founder of *The Vertikal Press*, looks back on the company he launched in 1999.

I used to be a freelance journalist who wrote about everything from criminality, to cults and, of course, cranes. The most satisfying subject was the lifting industry. Why? Because it is run by “real” people who devour information – I know that every single page of every issue of *Cranes & Access* is read by thousands of people. If we ever got something wrong, (which can happen!), we got instant response because our readers care passionately about this business. What’s nice is that when the magazine does something really good, it also gets feedback. Thank-you to those people who write and phone – you make the job exciting and remind editors that, unlike some industries, magazines are really read in this business.

I will miss those contacts now that I am no longer publisher of *Vertikal Press* but I am truly delighted that my place is being taken by Leigh Sparrow. He brings a wealth of crane and access industry experience that complements the many talents of the existing team. Very, very important, is that he is passionate about cranes and platforms.

My responsibilities at IPAF mean less contact with the crane industry, something I very much regret. But, exhibitions are a great place to meet people and IPAF will be exhibiting at many of the same shows as *Vertikal Press* so I hope to keep in contact.

Why am I leaving publishing, an industry that has looked after me for the last 20 years? Because IPAF, a non-profit organisation, is dedicated to raising safety standards and reducing accidents in the platform business. Even though recession blights parts of the industry today, it is going to experience huge growth in the near future and I look forward to IPAF playing a vital part in training and protecting the people who use platforms around the world.

So, a huge thank-you to you the readers, customers and staff who have created *Cranes & Access* and its sister magazines, *Kran & Bühne*, *Vertikal bauma* and *Vertikal.net*. Thank-you and good luck – see you at *bauma*?

Tim Whiteman (tw@vertikal.net)

Vanson launches luffer

VANSON CRANES has introduced a new compact luffing jib tower crane for use on restricted construction sites. The company says that the new VC 20.1L has been designed and engineered to combat the impracticality of using larger cranes on smaller sites, and that by incorporating steel counterweights for a 2 metre ‘tail’ radius and making the jib out of service at a 3 metre radius, it has produced a very compact out of service envelope.

The unit can accommodate extended jib lengths to 20 metres radius at which the crane provides a 1 tonne lifting capacity. Maximum lifting capacity is 3.5 tonnes at a 4.3 metre radius. The VC20.1L can be erected on a 1.2 metre squared tower, freestanding to 36 metres, or mounted directly on the roof of a building. All of the crane’s components are designed to be lift transportable and can be manhandled to avoid the need of a mobile crane for erection. ■





AFI opens German business

AFI, THE UK-based access rental company headed by ex-Lavendon managing director David Shipman, is working closely with a team headed by ex-Zoom managing director Günther Aust to help the team open a new rental operation in Germany.

A substantial part of the new operation will be owned by the German management team so maintaining AFI's policy of meaningful employee investment, especially from the senior management team.

AFI has also boosted its UK depot network with the opening of two addition depots in London East and Birmingham. The London East depot at Upminster will work together with the company's established London West depot, which was opened in July at Iver Heath, Buckinghamshire to over coverage throughout London and the surrounding areas.

Steve Porter has been appointed as regional sales manager for London East, while Paul Burford will oversee operations at the Birmingham branch. Both depots will initially operate a fleet of 100 boom and scissor lifts and AFI plans to double this figure during the next 12 months.

AFI now offers UK coverage from a total of nine depots with a combined fleet of over 700 boom and scissor lifts. According to the company, its turnover has doubled to £4.2 million during the 2003 financial year and it expects this figure to rise to £6.5 million during 2004. ■



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Reach more with the TB 220.

Its extraordinary lateral outreach of 13,80 m makes the STEIGER® TB 220 just as attractive as its working height of 22 m. It is mounted on a 3,5 t carrier chassis and can already be driven with the Euro B driving licence. Its short overall length is the point in favour of its flexibility at each place of utilisation. Its automatic

First for SEV

SEV GROUP is now taking orders for its first 12 metre working height truck mounted platform, which is now in full production. Designated the AL12, the unit has been designed for mounting on 3.5 tonne truck chassis, offering a 12.3 metre working height and 4.8 metre outreach.

An 'easy-to-mount' King Post kit version is also available at a discounted price. The company says that the AL12's safe working load of 0.215 tonnes combined with closed dimensions and a narrow jacking width make the unit ideal for busy city centre work, road bridge and lighting maintenance, tree surgery and general building maintenance.

David Smith, managing director of the SEV Group, said that whereas the 12 metre powered access market has traditionally been serviced from trailer mounted units or straight telescopic van mounted platforms, the AL12 combines the best of both worlds with knuckle boom configuration and very quick set-ups. The development of the AL12 King Post kit means that the unit can easily be fitted to a broad spectrum of lightweight chassis to accommodate both home and export markets. ■

Crane Safety 2004

THE DATES have been issued for the next UK Crane Safety conference. The annual event organised by Cranes Today and Hoist will once again be held at the Thistle Tower Hotel, London on the 21 and 22 of June, 2004. The theme this time around will be Crane Safety: Management and Technology.

The two-day conference will be home to various discussions that will address human factors, man management and operational issues, while a number of 'break-up' workshop sessions will address technology, engineering and technical issues for specific sectors of the lifting industry. ■



Manitowoc Group announces net earnings decline on rising sales

THE MANITOWOC Company has announced a 7 per cent increase in sales for the third quarter of 2003 compared to the same period of 2002, which it said largely reflects the company's acquisition of Grove Worldwide in August 2002.

Like-for-like revenues for the quarter declined by 9 per cent, reflecting a weak North American crawler crane market. This was partially offset, however, by improvements in the sales of tower cranes and mobile cranes in Europe and Asia.

Net earnings for the quarter fell by over 50 per cent to US\$7.2 (UK£4 million), compared with a figure of \$14.7 million (UK£8.7 million) reported in the same period in 2002.

Year-to-date sales for the first nine months of 2003 improved by 23 per cent to \$1.2 billion (UK£0.7 billion). With the Grove acquisition excluded, like-for-like revenues were down by 12 per cent.

Sales for the crane businesses were up 20 per cent for the third quarter of 2003 to \$263 million (UK£156 million), compared to a figure of \$220 million (UK£131 million) for the corresponding period of 2002.

Nine month sales for 2003 jumped by 56 per cent to \$768 million (UK£457 million), from \$491 million (UK£292 million) in 2002, largely attributable to acquisition activity.

Operating income for the Group dropped by around 50 per cent to \$9 million (UK£5.35 million) for the quarter and \$25 million (UK£14.9 million) for the nine months, compared to \$19.3 million (UK£11.4 million) and \$52 million (UK£31 million) respectively reported in 2002. The poor results in the crane businesses were blamed on pricing pressures and low volumes stifling margins.

The backlog for the crane companies at the end of September was \$150 million (UK£89 million).

Around 70 per cent of Manitowoc's crane sales are now outside of North America, reflecting the massive change in the group's crane business profile that the acquisitions of Potain and Grove have brought.

The company stated that one of its key strategies was to expand its global market share in the crane business by investing in new products and product support while simultaneously increasing operating efficiencies.

Terry Growcock, Manitowoc's chairman and chief executive officer said: "We are seeing increased international activity and gains in market share resulting from the strategic acquisitions of Potain and Grove Worldwide, and we are aggressively protecting our market share elsewhere. As we have previously said, we expect that crane industry conditions will remain difficult throughout next year."

"We have taken many steps in our crane businesses over the past year to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Despite decisive actions, a competitive pricing environment and lack of volume are overshadowing our ability to generate higher margins. When our end markets recover, we are optimistic that our margins will rebound strongly," Growcock added.

A sum of \$1.2 million (UK£0.7 million) was included in the third quarter for ongoing plant rationalizations and closures within the crane sector. A good deal of this reflects the ongoing integration of the National Crane business into Grove's Shady Grove plant.

Cash generation for the Group was by far the highlight, with \$70 million (UK£41.6 million) generated in the quarter and \$94 million (UK£56 million) year to date. Much of this cash was used to pay down debt earlier than expected and at the nine month stage the company is already ahead of its planned reductions for the year. ■

positioning system, carrying capacity of 200 kgs and the memory function are only a few details of the comprehensive standard outfit. Especially appreciated is the TB220 due to its low passing clearance, its extraordinary quiet running and its stability. Make an appointment for a test drive!

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JCB wins £2.5 million order

GREENSHIELDS JCB has landed a £2.5 million contract to supply telehandlers and rough terrain (RT) forklifts to street cleansing and heavy plant equipment supplier, Kent Sweepers (KS) in Rochester, Kent. The company has taken delivery of 80 Loadall telehandlers, comprising Loadall 535-954s, 537-135s, 540-70s, 540-170s with lift capacities ranging from 3.5 to 4 tonnes and lift heights ranging from 9.5 to 16.7 metres.

Long-standing JCB customer KS today operates 9 depots throughout the UK and a fleet solely consisting of JCB machines. "We like to keep to one brand so we have uniformity," said Len Smith, owner and managing director of KS. "Most of our people have expertise on the JCB machines and historically we have used JCB." As part of the contract, JCB also supplied a number of its 926 RT forklifts. ■

HSE issues cherry picker guidance

THE HEALTH and Safety Executive (HSE) has published a new information sheet on preventing falls from boom-type Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWPs), or 'cherry pickers'.

The HSE said that the new guidance is aimed at those who use or control the operations of boom type MEWPs, used across a range of industries including construction, agriculture, public utilities and shipbuilding.

HSE Information Sheet MISC614 - *Preventing falls from boom-type mobile elevating work platforms* clarifies the issues surrounding the selection and use of appropriate personal fall protection equipment used as part of a suitable personal fall protection system.

Analysis of the causes of accidents involving MEWPs showed that accidents were primarily caused by unsuitable ground conditions; critical parts of the MEWP failing or malfunctioning; or the MEWP being struck by another vehicle. Consequently it is critical that these issues are eliminated or properly controlled.

The HSE also said that fall protection should not be relied upon as the only means of control because if the MEWP is pushed over or falls over, then being attached to it by a fall protection system is unlikely to prevent you from being injured or killed. For this reason, advice on controlling the risk by ensuring a safe site, safe plant and a safe operator are essential parts of this guidance.

The guidance does not specifically apply to scissor lifts where fall protection is not normally required, unless a person needs to lean over the guardrail. In this instance, the sections of the guidance that relate to safe plant, a safe site and a safe operator are relevant to preventing falls from scissor lifts due to overturning incidents. ■

RK buys SVP to become Finland's largest rental co

RAKENTAJAIN KONEVUOKRAAMO oyj (RK), the second biggest rental company in Finland, has bought 100 per cent of Suomen Projektivuokraus (SPV) capital stock to create Finland's largest rental company as measured by turnover. RK is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary and it is understood that Tatu Hauhio, the son of Kari Hauhio, a previous owner of SPV, will head up the new SPV division of RK.

The deal comes at a time when Reijo Saarenoja, managing director of the RK Group, is due to retire. The managing director designate is Vesa Koivula. Both RK and SVP run large access fleets, including scaffold, self-propelled, truck and trailer lifts and significant mast climber fleets.

RK has 62 outlets in Finland while SVP has six. Both companies also carry a wide range of products, including small tools and cabins. ■

Volvo Rents to open third Ireland location

VOLVO CONSTRUCTION Equipment Rents has signed an agreement with Cawley & Scanlon Construction to open a Volvo Rents franchise in Ballymote, County Sligo, Ireland. This takes Volvo Rents' Irish network to three locations, the first of which opened in August this year. The two established franchises are operated by Tullamore Tool and Plant Hire and Michael Hickey Plant and Tool Hire respectively. The new location is expected to be open for business within a month.

As well as Volvo's core product lines the franchisees will also have access to a wide range of non Volvo products under a preferred supplier programme, whereby Volvo selects, evaluates and negotiates beneficial prices for their franchisees. The non Volvo product line up includes a wide range of aerial work platforms and many of the North American stores have selected units as a significant part of their start up fleet. There is as yet, however, no indication as to if, or when, the budding Irish network might start to add such equipment to its fleets.

Franchisees will, however, benefit from a Volvo telehandler line up when it is launched. Volvo purchased the rights to the UpRight telehandler range in 2002 and it is believed to be "Volvoising" it and preparing for production. The company has also announced the signing and completion of a "development agreement" for up to 18 locations in Spain, giving its European programme a significant boost. ■

Lavendon Group issue profit warning

THE LAVENDON Group, Europe's largest powered access rental company, today issued a trading update warning that lower than expected revenues in Germany and the UK is likely to put pressure on its full-year earnings.

The company issued an interim statement in September that noted "caution regarding prospects for the rest of the year". There has been an improvement in activity since the summer, but recent weeks have seen that trend fall below earlier expectations.

Given these more difficult trading conditions, management focus has centred on controlling costs, generating free cash and reducing debt levels.

In the UK, activity in the commercial/industrial construction, manufacturing and telecommunications sectors has remained subdued and is currently below that of last year, resulting in a year-on-year revenue decline of some 4 per cent, with consequential pressure on margins.

The company reports that activity in Germany continues to be depressed, causing a decline in year-on-year demand. The effect is now being partially offset by an improvement in hire rates, which limited the revenue decline to 5 per cent in the period to mid-October this year.

The Group's other European operations are together still showing year-on-year revenue growth and an improving trend in profitability. In the Middle East, growth in both revenues and margins are substantial and this is expected to continue for the remainder of the year.

A Lavendon Group spokesperson said: "Whilst the performance of our operations in the UK and Germany has not met expectations during recent weeks, which will have a significant effect on the overall profitability of the Group for the year. Strong cash flows continue to be generated, allowing the Group to reduce debt levels month-by-month". ■