

Safety: the strength of the message is vital

Some 120 IPAF members and guests heard Paul Adorian open IPAF's Safety Forum, held in conjunction with its AGM and Lunch on April 16

The lifting of people by equipment never designed for this purpose remains widespread in many countries, particularly the UK, and poses horrific opportunities for death and serious injury. The urgent need to eliminate these practices was the principal focus of the Safety Forum.

HSE policy

Director of Safety Policy for the HSE, Nick Starling, outlined the initiatives being taken to improve safety of all those working at height. The Temporary Work at Height Directive is to be introduced as a consultation document with a view to implementation in 2004.

On the specific question of misuse of goods-lifting equipment to lift people, however, he confirmed that the current HSE guidance is that this is allowed in 'exceptional' circumstances and that, without statistical evidence of this being a major problem, there

were no plans to change this. He hinted that evidence of the extent of such misuse, if presented to the HSE, could influence this current view.

French prohibition

The French government's stronger line, expressed by Ian Fraser of their Ministry of Employment, focuses on prohibition. Legislation from 1947 was similar to the current UK situation, although exceptions required prior authorisation and case-by-case investigation by the Labour Inspectorate.

New legislation, drawn up in 1998 and effective from January 2000 does, in theory allow exceptions, but the criteria exclude all but the truly 'exceptional' and Ian Fraser underlines that, in practice, this leaves no case whatever for using forklifts to lift people.

Accident causes

Dave Merrifield, Chairman of the ANSI A92 Committee in the US, Head of the US Delegation to TAG - 214 - Technical Action Group and Corporate Director of Product Safety for Omniquip Textron Inc offered an insight into the causes of accidents when variable reach trucks are used to lift people.

His considerable experience highlighted ignorance of, and failure to observe, US safety requirements. One of the most striking common factors of

overturn accidents were that they were preceded by movement of the raised lift truck to reposition the working platform - a practice which is specifically outlawed in the US.

Manufacturer's role

Andrew Sheridan, Commercial Manager of Caterpillar, explained his own company's approach to lifting people on telehandlers. This relies on purpose-designed attachments, with proper safety interlocks to prevent movement of the machine in the raised position and the whole machine and attachment combination meeting the requirements of EN280.

Pierre Saubot, Chairman of the IPAF Manufacturers Technical Committee, CEO of Pinguely Haulotte and a prime mover of the Safety Forum, highlighted the wealth of legislation already in place. The challenge for manufacturers now, he believes, is to produce access equipment to meet all the varied needs of the market and to persuade new customers to adopt its use when working at height.

Perhaps the most striking observation to come out of the Safety Forum is that relatively subtle differences of emphasis of legislation, standards and regulations and the manner in which they are presented can play a major role in their effectiveness.

A momentous year

At the AGM, Paul Adorian characterised 2001 as a momentous year of challenge, continued growth and consolidation for IPAF.

Drawing attention to the continued expansion of the training scheme, which trained nearly 20,000 operators, demonstrators and instructors over the year, he congratulated member companies and individual instructors on their hard work responsible for such success. Looking to the future he anticipated that the training revolution evidenced in the UK will be reflected in more European countries as EC requirements are enforced and as recession lifts.

He also announced the first major development in the expansion of members services - the launch of the new IPAF website at www.ipaf.org. The easy to use site will continually expand the wide range of information and new links with other information to keep members fully up to date with development in the industry.



Nick Starling of the HSE

At the Luncheon following the AGM, some 200 members and guests raised a total of £1350 for the New York Fire Department to add to that already received.

Mast climbers - the definitive guide

Andrew Reid, Chairman of the IPAF MCWP Committee, announcing one of the most significant developments in mast climbing - the publication of BS 7981 Code of Practice for Installation, maintenance, thorough examination and safe use of mastclimbing work platforms (MCWPs).

The new Code reflects the collective expertise of the IPAF MCWP Committee as well as that of other industry experts and is a comprehensive guide to all aspects of mcwps and is expected to save developers, construction companies, their professional advisers, contractors, hirers and specialist installers considerable time and cost.

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