

# Construction update

Newsletter | March 2013



## Welcome

Preventing falls on construction sites is a key area of focus for the Health and Safety Executive. Falls on construction sites can also result in significant insurance claims. With 1.5 million pieces of powered access plant in use worldwide, a database on falls related to the use of powered access equipment is starting to provide information which can be used to prevent falls on construction sites.

In this issue we take a look at powered access safety as well as:

- Plant security
- Public safety
- Recent court cases.

The International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) launched an accident database 12 months ago. A year on and the database reveals that 31 workers died worldwide in accidents involving mobile elevating work platforms last year. Two of the fatalities reported occurred in the UK. Falls from the platform, electrocution and plant overturning were the most common incidents. Half the fatalities involved a machine with a boom. Whilst these figures are tragic it must be remembered that the use of such plant will have prevented many falls from height and if managed correctly, powered access presents a safe way to work at height.

As part of the correct management approach, the UK Contractors Group are urging steel erectors and net riggers to ensure powered access plant users hold an IPAF PAL+ qualification. This is a one-day course for experienced operatives working in high-risk environments. The course gives practical training and a short theory

session and is open to operatives who hold a Powered Access License (PAL) card.

## Keeping good order

The Health and Safety Executive have recently been running a campaign to reduce the number of fall and trip accidents on construction sites. A key issue which inspectors look for on site is good housekeeping, with walkways kept clear of obstruction and with even surfaces. Particular emphasis should be given to the proper management of waste streams.

Principal contractors can maintain good order on site by:

- Segregating pedestrian and traffic routes
- Minimising the amount of materials stored on site
- Communicating a formal site policy for managing materials and waste.

Workers on site can help maintain good order on site by:

- Keeping walkways and stairways free of obstruction
- Keeping footpaths firm and level
- Complying with waste management rules



- Reporting housekeeping issues to site management.

Keeping good order on site will not only prevent accidents but also reduce the risk of materials theft and fire.

## Plant security update

The Plant and Agricultural National Intelligence Unit has issued its 16<sup>th</sup> Quarterly report covering the period of July to September 2012. This period saw a 22% drop in plant theft. It is thought that the decrease is due to two reasons:

- The Mayor of London's ban on road and utility works over the Olympic Games period meant that much less plant was out on the streets of London
- Plant owners outside London had been warned that there would be less Police presence due to Police resources being drafted into London over the period of the Games. This may have raised the priority of plant safety.

Small plant remains the most popular theft item, with mini excavators being the most popular target for thieves. These smaller items can be removed from site easily on a trailer or in a vehicle. The south east of



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Evidence suggests that thieves taking larger plant have connections with the industry so they have the skills needed to drive the plant that is being stolen. One method of operation appears to be to form a bogus company, hire plant for a number of weeks and then hire a haulier to transport the plant to the continent. Once the plant is abroad it can be extremely difficult to recover. Due to the boom in development, increasing amounts of stolen plant is destined for Africa. Even if the plant is identified as stolen, the court proceedings to recover the plant from some countries requires the plant owner to attend court. As ultra low sulphur diesel is not available in some African countries, this may drive the thieves' attention to older plant.

Any strategy for controlling plant theft should have three key aspects:

- Prevent access to the plant using secure storage, security cameras and site monitoring
- Prevent the plant being removed from site using immobilisation techniques
- Allow for the effective location and identification of stolen plant using tracker technology and identification systems such as data spots.

### Public safety

Following a spate of accidents involving cyclists in London, contractors working in the capital are being requested to improve their management of site delivery activities by Transport for London. The request follows research on the interface between cyclists and construction vehicles

in London. The request asks for site safety management arrangements to be extended to include delivery vehicle activity on the highway. Suggestions to reduce the number of incidents involving construction vehicles include:

- Improved reporting of road collisions
- Improved use of mirrors and vehicle safety equipment to reduce blind spots
- Reviewing delivery time slots to give drivers more time to drive through London.

### National Refurbishment Inspection Initiative

In a drive to ensure continual improvement of standards within the construction sector the HSE have introduced their National Refurbishment Inspection Initiative, which will see construction sites across the country visited by local HSE inspectors. Between 18 February and 15 March, inspectors will make unannounced visits to construction sites where refurbishment or repair works are taking place to ensure they are managing high-risk activity such as working at height. They will also check for general good order, assess welfare facilities, and check whether suitable PPE, such as head protection, is being used appropriately. Companies that fall short of the required standard could also receive an invoice under the cost recovery scheme, Fee for Interventions. If an inspector discovers a material breach which they need to confirm in writing, companies will be charged £124 per hour for the inspector's time in dealing with the matter. Those engaging contractors could also be charged under the scheme where their failure to manage the contractor effectively has resulted in an unsafe environment.

### Fees for interventions

In October last year the Health and Safety Executive introduced a scheme for charging for time taken on site when commencing formal action such as serving notices or gathering evidence. Over the first two months of the scheme, the businesses visited by inspectors were invoiced for over £700,000, with around a third of these fees relating to construction businesses.

### In the Courts

A construction worker received severe burns to his face, neck and arms when he hit a buried electrical cable with a groundbreaker in November 2010. The contractor was asked to erect a new fence around a car sales business. His client provided him with no information on the whereabouts of two 11kV electricity cables buried 80 centimetres underground. When the breaker contacted the cables it caused a short circuit, which vapourised the breaker tip into molten metal, which caused the burns. The car sales business was fined £12,000 for breach of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations and ordered to pay £6,000 in costs.

In November 2011, a digger driver working on a drainage system for a housing development made an error when changing the bucket on his excavator. He failed to take any steps to ensure the bucket was secure and started to use it as soon as the change had been made. The bucket fell onto a nearby worker and caused head injuries, a broken leg and a broken pelvis. The driver was fined £500 and ordered to pay £3,500 compensation to the injured worker.



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### **Manual handling Construction Pack**

Pristine Condition Ltd, in association with the charity 'Backcare' and QBE, have produced a 'Construction Pack' specifically targeting manual handling and back issues in the construction industry. It will provide much needed information and resources particularly to sub-contractors and SME's who find it difficult to address the problem due to costs and logistics. The pack is based on a 'Train the Trainer' approach which is fully supported with training materials such as a DVD demonstrating the correct manual handling techniques across a wide variety of construction-based activities. It includes a full risk assessment, lesson plan, posters and tasks from industrial and domestic building sites which are covered in detail. A representative from the organisation would attend a Pristine training course and then go back to their company as a trained representative and 'Pass on the Principles' and techniques. For more information contact Pristine Condition Ltd at [www.pristinecondition.com](http://www.pristinecondition.com) or your QBE Risk Manager. See <http://youtu.be/GA2OiiuuQIY> to view the Backcare campaign.

### **QBE Risk Management**

This newsletter is produced by QBE's Risk Management service team, part of QBE European Operations' Property, Casualty and Motor division. We are a team of dedicated professionals who work closely with our clients to actively assist with accident prevention, employee rehabilitation and claims mitigation.

For more about our services, please visit [www.QBEurope.com/rm](http://www.QBEurope.com/rm) or email [RM@uk.qbe.com](mailto:RM@uk.qbe.com) or discuss with your Insurance Broker.

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