Plant Theft: A Balfour Beatty Exclusive

NEW GUIDANCE ON QUICK-HITCHES

FUEL FOR THOUGHT

A-Plant Go to ASCOT

Nowhere to hide
HAVTEC

Breakthrough the problem of vibration white finger.

The Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre (OPERC) can help your company by providing reliable information on workers’ vibration exposure when using power tools.

Register now to access independent vibration data on a range of major power tools via the OPERC Hand-Arm Vibration Test Centre (HAVTEC). Registering is free and is available online at www.operc.com.

The HAVTEC register provides real life data measured in accordance with ISO 5349, allowing meaningful vibration risk assessments to be made following recent changes in health and safety legislation. OPERC can also provide consultant vibration services.

Why not become an OPERC member? For just £500 a year your company could also benefit from:

- Free professional publications.
- Guidance Notes, Codes of Practice, Best Practice Guides.
- Free access to the OPERC on-line Members Area.
- Free access to downloadable educational and learning materials.
- Free access to developing online resources including a plant theft register, product listings, insurance and legal services etc.
- Free attendance at OPERC seminars and events.

At an additional reasonable cost, OPERC also offers:

- SafetyNet - an online health and safety testing and management facility.
- A Lifelong Learning Zone - providing downloadable teaching and learning materials in a variety of formats.
- Books, DVDs, teaching and learning Study Modules etc., available through the OPERC Bookshop (discounted for members).

Other specialist research and consultancy services are available.

OPERC is a non-partisan, non-profit making organisation. Its principal objective is to research, develop and disseminate knowledge relating to plant and equipment science. It embraces all types of equipment from small power tools to the largest plant items. OPERC: helping raise standards, competence and professionalism within the plant and equipment sector.

For further information contact 01384 356202, email enquiries@operc.com or visit our website www.operc.com
In this issue, health, safety and the environment remain at the forefront of industry news. In particular, the announcement from the HSE that the latest figures for workplace fatalities show an increase on last year reminds us of the need for all employed within industry to do our bit, no matter how small, to contribute to a safer working environment. A cultural change in attitude towards health and safety is needed. On the positive side, many of the more responsible companies within industry are forging ahead with cultural change and/or working with others to produce best practice guidance. This has to be encouraged and the HSE have been extremely proactive in this respect.

Over the past 12 months, the industry jungle drums have been beating ferociously to defend the funding status of HSE and many are shocked to hear of cut backs in funding. Practitioners fear that although good progress has been made, a sudden dearth of finance could threaten to undermine good initiatives started and above all, industry willpower.

HSE and industry is a marriage and it is strange that for some time, the HSE has been the easy target of negative criticism and condemnation. People have joked about the nanny state, wrapping employees in cotton wool and ridiculous regulations or codes of practice. Those who have sat back and said nothing are now running to defend the HSE standard – strange how the value of something is often overlooked and taken for granted until we almost lose it.

From everyone at Plant and Equipment Professional, may we wish you all a very merry and safe Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Editorial Team
Philippa Spittle, Graham Eaves

Published by
Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre (OPERC)

Distributed by:
IRAS Group

Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre (OPERC)
PO Box 5039, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 9FQ
Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1384 356202
Email: enquiries@operc.com (general)
       pep@operc.com (newsletter)
Web: www.operc.com

Copyright © 2007 OPERC

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information published in Plant and Equipment Professional, neither the Editors nor the Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre can accept any responsibility for inaccuracies or omissions. The views expressed in articles are of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editors or the Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre.
Items of earth moving equipment, particularly excavators, often need their attachments changing to adapt to different work tasks. This change may be from a large bucket to a smaller one, from a rip to a grapple or from a bucket to a breaker; the options are numerous, as are the number of changes in any typical working day. Furthermore, the time needed to carry out an attachment change can be considerable, so when combined with the number of changes undertaken, this can often represent a significant loss of machine productivity.

Excavator quick-hitch devices have therefore been widely adopted, because they can significantly reduce the time required to change an attachment. However, the number of workplace accidents relating to the use of quick-hitches has increased of late, mainly due to their misuse or mismanagement. These accidents typically involve an attachment breaking free from a machine and falling on to a worker; many have been serious and regrettably, several deaths have resulted.

OPERC’s Guidance on the Safe Use of Excavator Quick-hitch Devices aims to educate and inform on this subject and was co-produced with Hewden (with additional support and sponsorship from CJM Engineering, Costain and Finning (UK) Ltd). By encouraging a safer approach to the use of quick-hitches, it is hoped that this guidance will help to reduce the unfortunate accident statistics relating to them.

Mr Graham Eaves, OPERC President, said “The industry is indebted to Hewden for having the leadership and vision to tackle this issue head-on and work with OPERC to produce some excellent technical guidance for industry.”

Speaking on behalf of Hewden, Mr Martin Williams said “Our research into the issue of quick-hitches concluded how important to both Hewden operators and customers this matter is. We are delighted to have had the opportunity to work with OPERC, assisting with the production of a first class guidance document which will help ensure that accidents/ incidents are eliminated on site altogether.”

This new publication is FREE to download from OPERC’s on-line bookshop, whilst published copies can be purchased for £20.
A-Plant supplies Sodexho for Royal Ascot

A-Plant has supplied Sodexho Prestige, the UK’s largest event caterer and provider of corporate hospitality packages, with material handling equipment and temporary accommodation units for the set up and management of catering and logistics services at the spectacular 2007 Royal Ascot race meeting. The sole catering contractor for Ascot since 1998, Sodexho Prestige hired a fleet of equipment from A-Plant, including a rough terrain fork lift, a telehandler and anti-vandal, secure office and storage units.

Ascot Racecourse, founded in 1711, is the world’s most famous racecourse. The very best horse racing on the Flat takes place at Ascot between March and October, with the main highlight undoubtedly being the internationally renowned Royal Ascot in June.

Royal Ascot is regarded as one of the biggest flat race meetings in the calendar and Ascot Hospitality, managed by Sodexho Prestige, prepares carefully to ensure the best catering service for over 80,000 visitors to every part of the racecourse, which now includes the new multi-million pound stand opened last year. The fork lift and telehandler from A-Plant featured heavily in both load and carry work and the installation of large marquees and other structures in the Village area in the centre of the racecourse.

Food and drink consumption during Royal Ascot is one of the biggest catering days in horseracing. Last year, a massive total of 170,000 bottles of champagne, 160,000 pints of beer, 14,000 bottles of red, white and rose wine and 14,000 bottles of Pimm’s were consumed every day and over 172 tonne of ice was used! Food sales soared as diners enjoyed the delights of 10,000 lobsters, 18,000 salmon steaks, four tonne of beef and 20,000 scones per day!

Sodexho Prestige is part of A-Plant Key Account customer, London-based Sodexho UK & Ireland, a leading integrated facilities management provider in the UK and Ireland with clients in the business and industry, education, healthcare, defence and leisure sectors. As well as Ascot, Sodexho Prestige looks after public catering at over 25 museums, attractions, racecourses and stadia such as the Chelsea Flower Show, Blenheim Palace, Knebworth House and Epsom Downs Racecourse, as well as providing sales and marketing and operational services for conference and banqueting at these sites.

As a Key Account customer, Sodexho can call on equipment fleets held at over 200 different A-Plant locations across Great Britain. The company benefits from specially developed IT systems at A-Plant, including an expanding range of on-line services available through its industry-leading Extranet system. As well as over 200 locations throughout Great Britain, A-Plant has more than 2,500 employees, over 30,000 customers in the construction, civil engineering and DIY markets and in excess of 110,000 items of plant and equipment.

A-Plant has a programme of continuous investment in brand new state-of-the-art equipment from world-leading manufacturers to meet the needs, not only of its Key Account customers, but also the local business served by A-Plant depots nationwide. A-Plant offers the complete one-stop shop from a broad product offering.

As part of FTSE-250 company Ashtead Group plc, the leading UK and US equipment outsourcer, A-Plant is committed to providing the best hire service in the world and this is reinforced by the company’s website at www.aplant.com, which provides a definitive on-line guide for the equipment hire industry.
NOWHERE TO HIDE

Tracking firm Automatrics has shown that thieves can no longer expect an easy ride when looking for a safe place to stash their booty.

The highly secret and patented technology developed for Automatrics tracking systems continues to exhibit an unprecedented ability to locate and recover protected assets hidden just about anywhere.

On the 29th August 2007 over £40,000 worth of gleaming Mercedes was recovered after a thirty minute search by the firm’s own find and recovery team. The car, originally stolen from Birmingham, was hidden inside a steel container which was then transported by rail to Southampton docks where it was stacked among 12,000 other similar containers all awaiting shipment out of the UK.

The astute owner was delighted to see his vehicle returned undamaged, still with the keys in the ignition.

Richard Taylor from Automatrics explained that professional thieves can usually outsmart the more commonly used tracking systems. He said: “Our customers have a higher degree of reassurance, knowing their assets have the best chance of being recovered, no matter where thieves try to hide them.”

Automatrics systems have proven to be virtually impossible to defeat with performance levels that exceed even the most expensive CAT 5 rated systems. They have also demonstrated that they can operate in the most challenging of operational environments.

For further information call 0044 (0) 1329 663812 or email: sales@automatrics.co.uk

New chair appointed at HSC

Ms Judith Hackitt CBE has succeeded Sir Bill Callaghan as Chair of the Health and Safety Commission. Ms Hackitt, whose five year term with HSC commenced on 1st October 2007, is returning from an assignment as Director of the Chemistry for Europe project with the European Chemical Industry Council based in Brussels.

Welcoming Ms Hackitt to her new role Sir Bill Callaghan said, “Congratulations to Judith Hackitt on her appointment. Her previous role as a commissioner, and her considerable experience in the chemical industry, makes her well placed for the responsibility for taking forward the HSC’s strategy for making health and safety a cornerstone of our society, achieving a record for workplace health and safety that leads the world and seeing through the merger of HSC and HSE.”
Plant theft: a Balfour Beatty exclusive

The forthcoming second edition of OPERC’s publication ‘Plant and Equipment Theft: A Practical Guide’, identifies that the cost of plant theft within the UK can be quantified at as much as £100 million per annum. This staggering statistic is further exaggerated when it is considered that the average recovery rates for stolen plant range anywhere between a mere five and ten per cent.

Owners and operators must maintain an awareness of the problem, and take practical measures to address it, if they want to avoid becoming a victim. Fortunately, the technologies that underpin plant security and stolen asset recovery systems continue to evolve. If properly employed, these technologies make it harder for criminals to steal plant, whilst also increasing the probability of stolen assets being reunited with their legitimate owners.

One recent success story, involving a swoop by the Ipswich Police, resulted in the recovery of stolen plant and equipment items from Balfour Beatty Power Networks. Mr Rob Sonnex, Plant Manager, said “The operator didn’t know that the tracker was fitted to the TR113 tractor and was very apologetic when it went missing. As soon as I heard the news, I contacted Tracker to activate the system and within a few days the machine had been located. A police constable informed me that the vehicle had been found in an Aladdin’s cave of stolen goods which turned out to be a clearing in a coppice. Suspects were found near to the scene and crucially, evidence gathered could reveal who the crooks are."

When asked about any damage caused as a result of the theft Mr Sonnex continued “Balfour Beatty stickers were removed, a number plate was lost or had been removed and one of the doors was broken, so the damage was minimal and we are delighted to have recovered the stolen items. Full credit to the police and staff at Tracker for the first class work they have done.”

Interestingly, the criminals had managed to produce a replica key that could start the vehicle; this was apparent because the Balfour Beatty key was held by staff. Although this raises a question on the ease at which replica keys can be manufactured, this case does demonstrate the value of an effective plant recovery system.
As a Site Manager are you doing enough to prevent falls from vehicles?

Every year, around 2000 workers across all industries are seriously injured in falls from vehicles. As a Site Manager it is your responsibility to ensure a safer workplace by planning in advance the loading and unloading of vehicles.

For your free safety poster visit hse.gov.uk/fallsfromvehicles

Don’t chance it

Health and Safety Executive

CHANGE IT
Presentations will include:

- Dust control
- Plant theft
- Quick hitch attachment safety
- Underground services
- Hand-arm vibration
- Prize presentations

You will also hear all about the latest OPERC products, services and resources. This will include a FREE copy for all attendees of the latest OPERC publications on guidance for the safe use of excavator quick hitches and brake-testing for rubber-tyred vehicles.

This event is FREE to attend – for more information and to register on-line please visit the News and Events pages on the OPERC website (www.operc.com) or email us at: enquiries@operc.com
SAFE - FAST - EASY

VERSATILITY
- Connects to all buckets in the same weight class regardless of make
- Low profile design improves breakout force

SAFETY
- Has independent fullproof safety lock

STRENGTH
- Cast in steel grade A5 @ 600MPa
- Tested to twice the capability requirements

QUALITY
- Built to ISO9001
- TS – 16949 standards
- AS 1418 pending
- BS 4742 pending

PATENTED WORLDWIDE
- NZ Patent App 550869
- NZ Reg Design App 408275
- Foreign rights pending
Fitness to operate?

Having just got to grips with competence qualifications, senior safety advisors within the mobile plant and equipment community are now turning their focus to the issue of operator fitness to drive.

In reality ‘fitness to drive’ is already embedded within the culture of leading ‘ethical’ companies operating within the UK and has been so for a number of years. Any mention of fitness to drive seems to invoke panic within some quarters and hence the issue is often referred to in terms of ‘health screening’. Such practice is set to become common practice throughout industry. One example is the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations, 2005 which require employers to conduct health surveillance on all operators who operate plant and/or machinery.

The aim is simple – to regularly assess the health of employees to spot symptoms of illness at an early stage before they progress to something more permanent and severe. The benefit is that not only are workers protected but so too are employers and given today’s litigious society, the cost of health surveillance far outweighs the consequences of legal action. Others employ drugs and alcohol policies and these are supported by stringent testing regimes.

Fitness to operate may have slipped under the radar but it is here to stay. Have your say on this issue. Send your opinions to Letters to the Editor at pep @operc.com.

The reaction of some within industry has been to question the need for operator physical assessment and examination. Some also claim that this move is more evidence of a nanny state and that the UK authorities are exceeding the requirements of existing regulations (sometimes referred to as gold-plating). On the reverse, others would point towards the DVLA and the requirement that drivers must report to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) any health condition likely to affect their driving (as under the Road Traffic Act 1988, Section 94). They question why the operator of a mobile plant and equipment item is any different to the driver of a car.
Some readers may consider that liquid management is all about finding out how many glasses of red are in a bottle of Rioja but Liquid Management Solutions Ltd would like to show us otherwise.

Over the years gas oil has been considered relatively cheap compared to its sister product road diesel, not requiring the same sort of management considerations as its road going counterpart. This is no longer the case. Since July 1997, the duty on red diesel has risen by a massive 150% compared with a rise on road diesel duty over the same period of only 2½%. Add this to the increase in crude oil prices and gas oil has now become a precious commodity, which needs to be managed.

With recent governmental announcements of a 26% rate increase in the cost of rebated fuel (gas oil) to be introduced in April 2008, a need to monitor fuel usage has never been so crucial. When asked, most quarry or plant managers will know how much they spend on gas oil per month, but when questioned further will admit they don’t actually know where it is going.

On construction sites or open quarries the monitoring of how much fuel is delivered to each piece of plant is usually at best carried out by pencil and paper, at worst not at all. Over the years companies have tried to install conventional fuel monitoring systems used by the road haulage industry onto a fuel bowser application with disastrous results. In short, these systems have simply not been designed or manufactured to withstand the continuous harsh environments and heavy-handed operators.

**RFID & fuel monitoring**

Until recently, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) was a somewhat hidden technology, pioneered and adopted for its operational benefits by the military. Early examples of RFID were used by the British forces in World War II to identify enemy planes crossing the English Channel, by sending a simple signal asking friend or foe. Now, in 2007, RFID has been voted one of the most simple, yet robust, technologies and is being heavily invested in by some of the world’s largest manufacturers and retail organisations, such as Wal-Mart, Gillette and Marks & Spencer.

RFID has been effectively applied to fuelling technology across Europe for a number of years. Whilst a RFID fuel-monitoring solution can be installed in a static environment to refuel wheeled...
vehicles, Liquid Management Solutions identified that the major benefit would be to introduce the UK's first RFID refuelling solution designed specifically for a mobile fuel bowser. This solution has been successfully designed and used to accommodate the regular vibration and dirty environments of a quarry or construction site application.

Using a simple 12v or 24v battery as the power feed, the bowser can be taken throughout the construction site or quarry floor, dispensing every single litre of fuel with 100% accuracy to tracked plant and other associated equipment i.e. static pumps. The RFID solution will only authorise the refuelling of a vehicle, or piece of plant, that it recognises with a unique pre-installed and programmed RFID tag. This immediately ensures no refuelling of unauthorised vehicles or the odd ‘jerry can’, putting a stop to these commonly accepted situations of fuel pilferage.

Simplicity and ease of use are prerequisites for the user of RFID fuel monitoring and the only manual intervention required is to put the fuel nozzle in the tank and squeeze the trigger. Environmentally, the solution negates any concerns surrounding expensive and commercially damaging fuel spillage incidents, as the fuel pump cuts off within seconds of breaking the ‘live’ RFID signal.

If you don’t measure it; you can’t manage it

The old cliché ‘if you don’t measure it; you can’t manage it’ has never been more of a reality. RFID fuel monitoring can provide fundamental management information to the operation, assessing tangible key performance indicators on vehicles or plant usage levels in absolute ‘real-time’. The RFID tags come in two formats:

Passive – This tag can be self-installed and simply ensures that fuel is accurately deposited into the vehicle or item of plant. Any attempts to tamper with or remove the passive RFID tag will result in the unit ceasing to work immediately.

Smart - This advanced tag has to be installed by an engineer but can automate the collection of either odometer readings or the collection of engine hours run during the refuelling operation. The unit can be removed from the vehicle or item of plant but can only be re-programmed by a specific secure encoding unit.

Data is not only securely retrieved via a GSM modem communications link but is also backed up by a 2 or 4MB memory card, which is fitted as standard.

The RFID refuelling solution delivers numerous operational and financial cost savings, reducing not only wasted time and resources trying to manage fuel usage levels, but also increasing the speed at which vehicles or items of plant refuel. Typically these are often hidden grey costs within any business.

About LMS

Midlands based fuel and fleet efficiency experts Liquid Management Solutions (LMS) have a wealth of over 25 years experience in assisting operators manage and control their costly fuel spend. Following the recent conclusion of a 2-year governmental fuel efficiency programme within the UK quarrying sector the company identified the need for an RFID based refuelling solution which could be fitted to a fuel bowser.

For further information contact:

Liquid Management Solutions Ltd, Creative Industries Centre, Wolverhampton Science Park, Wolverhampton, WV10 9TG, Tel: 0845 450 7373, URL: liquidms.co.uk
Key members of the construction industry have come together to provide users of hand-held electric power tools with information which will help control their exposure to hand-arm vibration.

The partnership between contractors, manufacturers and suppliers has resulted in a joint statement of co-operation between the Hand Arm Vibration Test Centre (HAVTEC) and the European Power Tool Association (EPTA) which agrees to the:

- continuation and development of the HAVTEC register as the common and freely available resource for the industry;
- publication of tool test data in compliance with manufacturers’ legal obligations under the Supply of Machinery Regulations;
- provision of exposure information which will enable the user to fully comply with health and safety legislation;
- development of a ‘traffic light system’ for each tool giving exposure detail based on the duration of usage and type of material worked on; and
- production of training materials and best practice guidance

This will mean an expansion of the HAVTEC register as users of hand-held electrical power tools will have access to additional accurate and detailed real life exposure data for new tools such as combi-hammers, breakers, saws etc. The data enables them to identify which tools they should use, for how long and on which material in order to control exposure to hand-arm vibration.

Members of the Major Contractors Group (MCG) welcome the agreement between HAVTEC and EPTA as it continues to support their policy (made in January 2007) to use only those hand-held power tools which are listed on the HAVTEC register. All those involved in the supply and use of such tools are urged to access the free information and resources within HAVTEC by visiting the OPERC website at: www.operc.com.

Mark Owen, Head of Health and Safety at Shepherd Construction, an MCG member, said:

‘Our intention is to ensure that everyone, without exception, has access to good freely available hand-arm vibration information in order to make considered judgements on the procurement and use of power tools. The HAVTEC database delivers the information required to make these decisions sensibly and ultimately gives any employer the opportunity to offer good protection for their workforce. I am delighted that EPTA has given its full support to HAVTEC.’

Bo Risberg (President of EPTA and CEO of Hilti), Gerry McHugh (Vice President of EPTA and Managing Director of Hitachi Koki, Europe) and Brian Cooke (Director General of EPTA) agreed:

“We are very pleased to have reached this agreement, as it will assist us greatly in our
“We are satisfied that the new standard for assessment of HAV relating to operation of hand-held electric power tools provides a useful first approximation of the risk posed to operators from hand-arm vibration...

...Such partnership will ensure the ongoing success of HAVTEC and provide a greater service to industry.”

Dr David J. Edwards
Loughborough University

relationships with our customers in the construction and hire industry. We look forward to working closely with all those involved for the benefit of our customers and end users”.

Dr David J. Edwards, Loughborough University said:

“We are satisfied that the new standard for assessment of HAV relating to operation of hand-held electric power tools provides a useful first approximation of the risk posed to operators from hand-arm vibration. We are delighted that EPTA members are now working in partnership with the Major Contractors Group, the Major Hire Companies Group and the Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre, to support the HAVTEC initiative which is based at Loughborough University. Such partnership will ensure the ongoing success of HAVTEC and provide a greater service to industry.”

Mark Turnbull, Health and Safety Director, Speedy Hire commented:

“I am delighted that agreement has been reached, particularly in respect of a common database. What this means going forward is that the hire industry will be able to provide its customers with reliable data, in a uniform manner, with the minimum of confusion. EPTA has paved the way and I hope that other manufacturing groups will follow suit.”

Falls and trips in construction are no laughing matter

The latest injury statistics show that 40% of all worker deaths in construction are caused by a fall from a height and in the last 5 years there have been 13 such deaths involving construction workers in the Eastern Region. In addition, hundreds of major injuries have involved a fall from below head height or tripping over materials on walkways.

In a bid to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by falls and trips, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out targetted inspections of construction sites throughout Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire during July. During the visits inspectors provided advice and promised to take robust enforcement action where a serious failure to comply and control the risk to those working on site is apparent.

HSE inspectors focused on making sure the correct precautions were taken during work at low and high heights to prevent the risk of a fall. They also checked that sites were kept in good order. Employers must ensure that workers are competent and have access to the right equipment. Sensible measures like keeping walkways on site clear must be taken to see an improvement in safety.
Since the founding of OPERC Mr Barry Robinson, MBE has been at the heart of its Executive working tirelessly for the benefit of members. Always a true professional, Barry has managed to work almost invisibly in the background whilst leaving a trail of good work and guidance behind him. In this frank interview, Barry reveals his background from humble beginnings to chief examiner of OPERC.

Barry started his career as a plant operator in 1963 working for various motorway contractors working on the M1 (C.A. Blackwell, George Wimpey, Derek Crouch, McGregor and Dowsett Engineering) and other contractors working on the A1. He also worked as a plant operator and section foreman on various coal sites and quarries up until 1980 and it was during this period that Barry acquired an indepth knowledge of plant and machinery operation. From 1980 onwards, Barry worked for Finning UK (formerly Bowmaker) in Cannock, West Midlands as an equipment demonstrator, instructor and then product specialist. At Finning Barry honed his skills as a technical expert on plant and machinery. At the tender age of 55 (December 2001) Barry set-up his own instructor and assessor centre for plant operation and in the New Year’s honours list 2004-2005 he received the MBE for his services to health and safety in quarries and OPERC.

Barry Robinson] Maintaining enthusiasm and energy have been the greatest challenges because all work within OPERC is done on a voluntary basis. At the outset it was decided that all funds should be ploughed back into products and services for members; after all the association is owned by the members. This philosophy is wonderful for industry but it does mean that executive officers have to dedicate a lot of their spare time and energy to OPERC and that can be difficult at times. However, every drop of energy has been worthwhile; you only have to look and see what has been achieved in such a short period of time to realise the very positive impact that OPERC guidance and publications are now starting to have. The executive team thrives on this success and it keeps the momentum going.

[Barry Robinson] The seed of OPERC was essentially planted back in 1998 when I visited a rather young academic called Dr David Edwards, who at that time was working at Wolverhampton University. Our views on the state of the industry were more or less identical and we established a close friendship almost immediately – it was like tectonic plates crashing together to form a new expanded land mass! It then took another 5 years of hard work, networking with practitioners, to pull together the association as it is today. The aim of OPERC then, as now, was to create first class information and resources for use by all industry, but ensuring high quality and low cost.

Interviewer] When was OPERC first established and what were the aims of the association?

Interviewer] Where do you see the association ten years from now?

Interviewer] What have been your greatest challenges during your tenure as OPERC Chief Examiner?
professional guidance. Growth seems to be the natural course of OPERC! It all started with a simple internet forum and quickly expanded to include the development of professional guidance, the on-line test, distance learning resources, DVDs, now this newsletter and more. It has never been the motive to be the biggest, the richest or the most influential – it was and still is about protecting people and working in partnership with industry without exploiting them.

[Interviewer] How did you become Chief Examiner?

[Barry Robinson] When OPERC-Safetynet was first developed by Mrs Maureen Showell and Miss Philippa Spittle back in 2000, I became involved in expanding the question bank for topics such as machine operation and maintenance. I next became involved in the project mapping the test environment and automated on-line reports against the S/NVQ framework – an idea that came from Mr Chris Jones at Training Express who was also a founding member of OPERC and was at that time acting under the auspices of the National Plant Operators Registration Scheme (NPORS). Working with Chris and companies such as Tarmac I progressed into position as Chief Examiner. I have never looked back and it is wonderful to be working with such a professional team.

[Interviewer] What are your opinions of the recent cutbacks to HSE funding?

[Barry Robinson] I am very concerned about this and I fear that this move may be well intentioned but poorly thought through. One viewpoint is that since professional bodies are now implementing self regulation and the overall trend in accident statistics (i.e. year on year) has improved, why are the HSE needed? I feel that although change is inevitable, the HSE have time and again proven to be the non-partisan conscience of industry and at times, and when needed, the enforcer of regulations. Regardless of the gestures made by practitioners, the primary aim of business is still to make money so how can self regulation work?

[Interviewer] If there was one change you could make in industry what would it be?

[Barry Robinson] I would remove the endless tiers of bureaucracy and cost constraints that stifle the industry and its operatives. The Health and Safety at Work Act 74 dictates that the operator must be trained and PUWER 98 states that he must be competent; it is as simple as that - be trained and competent. There is some really good innovative work going on out in industry but we do still suffer with party politics that one card or scheme is better than another. OPERC is not a training provider so the outcome of this particular debate does not affect it, but a fan in the terraces can often see the run of play far better than the opposing managers on the touch line. I genuinely feel that there should be one standard code of practice written and supported by all training providers and awarding bodies. The document should show a clear route from training through to competence and all parties should adhere to that guidance. This would increase competition and ensure that new innovative means of developing training and competence development can flourish. OPERC’s VCOP for operator training, best practice guide for instructors and L117 (along with other codes of practice) should be combined to produce one definitive document that all can follow.

[Interviewer] Finally, what are your thoughts on industry calls for an independent accreditation of training providers?

[Barry Robinson] This is potentially a good idea provided it does not add another tier of bureaucracy! Any scheme proposed should be supported by representatives from all training schemes, be run by an independent body and be administered at a reasonable cost that is not prohibitive to the smaller training provider within a scheme. However, in the absence of any form of independent training standard, this proposal would be difficult to implement.
In the previous issue we discovered how the RNLI launches lifeboats from exposed beaches, the dangers involved in this method of launching and the specialised launching tractors required for this dangerous and arduous job. We focused upon the largest launching tractor and boat, the Talus MBH and the 16 tonne Mersey class lifeboat.

In this issue we will look at the Talus MB-4H Hydrostatic tractor and the Atlantic 85 B class lifeboat, an 8.5 metre ridged inflatable boat (RIB) often called an inshore lifeboat (ILB).

This class of boat deals with a large percentage of the emergency rescues undertaken by the RNLI around our coastlines. The lifeboat is capable of working in very heavy weather conditions, day or night, and the brave crews who man this class of lifeboat are exposed to the full force of the weather, as there is no cabin! It is launched off a drive on, drive off (DoDo) hydraulic carriage which can be tilted to an angle that will allow the boat to have a bow up aspect on a steep beach or slipway. This greatly reduces the dangers of being washed back on to the carriage by large surf.

The Atlantic 85 B requires a specialised launching tractor, the Talus MB4-H. This tractor is required to work in a depth of up to 1.65m of calm sea but it also has to cope with crashing surf, day or night, winter or summer, calm or storm, twenty four hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It cannot afford to fail as this would put the operator and crew in severe danger.

It takes a special type of highly trained person to operate this machine, particularly in the extremes of conditions mentioned above. With this in mind lets take a look at the tractor, how it was designed and built and the mechanical specifications that allow it to stand up to these imposing conditions.

The Talus MB-4H is the first tractor to be specifically designed for the task of launching inflatable lifeboats. Previous lifeboat tractors had been converted from commercial designs, but these designs were becoming more difficult and costly to adapt and could not meet the RNLI requirements, such as ground clearance, steering ability and full waterproofing.

The tractor was developed jointly between the RNLI and Bigland Engineering (now Clayton Engineering) at the company’s test facility. The prototype was then tested at those lifeboat stations with the most arduous launching conditions. Trials were completed and the first tractor went on station at New Brighton in November 1990.

The drive system of the Talus MB-4H starts with the power unit: the Cat 3114 turbo 105hp engine. This power unit drives an A10VG variable axial piston swash plate pump, which in turn supplies the pressure for the two fixed variable A6VM axial
piston bent axis design drive motors in a closed loop system.

The drive motors are fixed to standard tractor axles, front and rear, through right-angled gear boxes, which are attached to the differential units in each of the two axles. These axles are sealed at the hub end where they penetrate the hull to stop the ingress of any water. The tractor is of a centre steer design and this system allows power to be transferred to both front and rear axles through an umbilical tube at the centre pivot area; it also makes the tractor extremely manoeuvrable in tight areas.

A secondary demand boost pump is fitted into the circuit to supply auxiliary hydraulic pressure for the hydraulic steering rams, hydraulic engine cooling fan, hydraulic engine bay flap closing rams (which need to be closed before entering the sea) and the hydraulic braking systems.

The tractor is totally waterproof and if the machine were to fail on the beach, or in the sea on a rising tide, it can be closed down and sealed, apart from the cab which is allowed to free flood by means of 25mm gaps in the door seal (where the water enters) and a 25mm gap in the roof hatch seal (where the air is expelled). Allowing this space to flood acts as ballast when submerged, keeping the tractor pinned to the sea bed, so that once the tide has receded the tractor can be recovered.

The front section of the tractor houses the power unit, hydraulic pumps, hydraulic oil tank front axle, cooling systems and fuel tank. The rear section houses the operator, drive controls, batteries, electronic control panel, drive gear, rear axle and hydraulic winch. The driving seat can face either way; control of the tractor is by a hydraulic steering wheel system at each position and the engine throttle pedal for each direction.

The fully automatic hydraulic transmission gives a ground speed corresponding to the load factors and engine output power and is controlled by a progressive directional joystick. There is also a hydraulic diff lock; should the tractor become bogged down both axle differentials can be locked in to give greater traction.

### Talus MB-4H Specifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>9.38 tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>105hp - Cat 3114 diesel turbo engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length</td>
<td>4.47m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td>2.66m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>2.75m (escape hatch down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Speed</td>
<td>22mph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawbar Pull</td>
<td>5-6 tonnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winch wire Pull</td>
<td>5 tonnes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A TRACTOR’S CHALLENGE... 
...TO A CRUEL SEA (cont)

Because the tractor has been specifically designed, it has been possible to build in a very efficient air cooling system. Air is brought in over the hydraulic cooling radiator and engine cooling radiator through an open flap situated on the side of the bonnet of the front hull section, by means of the hydraulic cooling fan. The air is expelled through the opposite flap. These flaps are operated by the driver when entering the sea by means of a bias switch which operates the hydraulic rams to close the flaps. There is a warning alarm which cuts if the flaps are not shut and this is operated by a simple float switch in the keel cooler housing.

When the tractor wades into the sea the hydraulic flaps are closed, water enters a pair of protected keel coolers, engine radiator and hydraulic radiator, which are located on the belly of the hull.

As you will have gathered by reading this article, life boating is not cheap. The RNLI strive to supply the most up to date, safe, and technically innovative launching equipment and boats, so that our brave men and women who risk their lives operating this type of launch equipment and boats to save others, stay safe.

Next time you are at the seaside and see a lifeboat launch, stop and think of the amount of work and design that has been carried out by dedicated people, just to get the boat to the water’s edge!

Pictures kindly donated courtesy of the RNLI and by Martin Fish, RNLI North West Regional News Letter Editor.

Technical data by: Clayton Engineering Manuals and Graham Eaves, Machinery Training Instructor RNLI, retired.
Go on and on with the green light

QUALITY FOR PROFESSIONALS

Heller is the first European drill bit manufacturer to have its products independently tested at OPERC/HAYTEC, the leading institute for Hand & Arm Vibration testing in the UK. The tests are designed to assess the negative impact on users through vibration, by the continued use of hand held power tools in construction industry.

Users need to be aware of and be protected from the effects of Hand & Arm Vibration which can have a serious impact on their health over time. The EU vibration directive 2004/40/EC has been introduced to regulate and manage this problem. Users may only be exposed to a defined level of vibration over a certain period of time.

The newly introduced traffic light system related to the power tools helps to easily determine the safe working times for users. Poor quality drill bits show a negative impact on both the vibration levels passed through the power tool as well as reductions in drilling times and general user efficiency. Heller drill bits demonstrated optimum efficiency and low vibration transmission with a wide range of popularly used, professional level drilling machines. Our recommendation: go for the “green light” products of Heller.

ITW Heller GmbH · Steinfeider Straße 11 · 49413 Dinklage · Germany · Phone +49(0)4443-9621-0 · Fax +49(0)4443-9621-10 · www.hellertools.com
Within UK industry, the role of the plant operator has been scrutinised and examined from every conceivable angle. Codes of practice for operator training have been released for general operation by OPERC and for more specialised equipment such as mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPS) by the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) and knuckle boom cranes by the Association of Lorry Loaders Manufacturers and Importers (ALLMI). On top of training, competence development schemes have been launched by the Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers (CMPE) and by the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) and S/NVQ competence qualifications are available from reputable awarding bodies such as LANTRA Awards and EMP Awards. Funding can be provided under the auspices of the Learning Skills Council (LSC) and support is given by the Sector Skills Council(s) (SSC). The latest thinking has seen the introduction of drugs and alcohol policies, fitness to drive 'health' checks and vehicle registration schemes. Plant operation has been elevated to professional status from its humble vocational roots that were originally steeped in grandfather rights. To become competent at a level II S/NVQ award today is possibly more complex than obtaining an undergraduate degree.

What have been the drivers for this evolution?

Competition amongst training providers has certainly had a lasting impact but the overarching driver has been safety mainly, spearheaded by the Major Contractors Group (MCG) in the construction industry. The MCG have proven that the longer term trend in accident rates can be reduced on their sites; no arguments here as the statistics are evidence enough despite this year’s unexpected peak. However, whilst accident rates in many industries seems to be on the decline (including the construction industry), accidents involving plant and equipment usage have historically remained unchanged and today plant and equipment accident reduction is high on the Health and Safety Executive’s agenda for change.
Leading academics have questioned for some time whether it is right to continue to focus on plant and equipment operators so much? The simple answer to this complex question is yes because unlike many other professional trades, the operator can work in isolation, remote from an established site office so they need to be self-sufficient. Under such circumstances, it could be argued that the risk of an incident is minimal because if no one is there, then no one can get injured! Unfortunately, the same is not true for modern quarries, manufacturing installations and construction sites where other operatives working within the vicinity of machines is the norm.

What else can be done to reduce accident rates?
Attempting to answer this question raises some serious concerns about industry’s current plant management provision. Within quarries a clear route to management qualifications is apparent with adequate qualifications available but within the manufacturing, construction and civil engineering industries, formal qualifications are less obvious particularly with respect to higher education qualifications. If we consider the two main routes into construction management for example (trade qualification and degree graduate) neither give adequate attention to plant and equipment management. On a typical undergraduate degree course, only 1 module out of 20-30 modules taught have any element of plant management and in some institutions, this module is optional. With trade qualifications, the same is true but if you search for undergraduate textbooks on the subject, then it is apparent that there is a significant shortage of core reference material. This finding seems strange considering the billions of pounds that are invested into mechanical resources each year in the aim of increasing productivity and profitability.

It is time for wider industry to adopt formal plant and equipment management qualifications and promote these within our existing education system, qualifications and short courses at further and higher education levels. Someone has to manage plant and equipment on site and this can only be done by educated, trained and competent managers. Additional gains in safety statistics are likely to be small if we continue to focus on the operator but a change in our attitude to professional qualifications could lead to significant gains and accident reductions.
Hindsight really is a wonderful thing and had OPERC Executive anticipated the success of the association when first established, then its website would have been planned for and developed far more effectively. Instead, it has become outdated, cumbersome and difficult to navigate through following the addition of new facilities, resources and services requested by members.

In a recent meeting of the OPERC Executive, the decision was taken to totally revise the website in order to make it more interactive, versatile and easy to navigate. Works should be completed by the end of 2007 and the aim is to provide a single porthole through which all services can be obtained with a minimum of surfing.
Fuel for thought?

The only fuel can to deliver fuel in a controlled way is about to be launched in the UK. The Flo Control Fuel Can has had many trials to overcome in its development, but it is now ready to hit the UK market and is already causing quite a stir.

Dawn Bone from Flow Control said:

“The can has many unique features. It delivers fuel at the touch a button with no spillage and no waste, whilst quick and efficient dispensing puts you in control. The can is being marketed as a fuel can for the professionals and its stylish and robust design enables the user to dispense 5 litres of fuel in just 15 seconds when required, or to just trickle fuel in when re-fuelling the smaller more difficult to fill fuel tanks on smaller machines. A safety cap on the end of the spout cuts down on contamination.”

The Flo Control Can has already won awards for innovation; originally the UK Company sought manufacturing in Eastern Europe, but has now taken the decision to have the can made completely in the UK and have assigned the assembly of the can to the Royal British Legion Industries in Kent.

The cans, which are 5 litres in capacity, are supplied with either a green handle for unleaded fuel or a black handle for diesel and the design incorporates an integrated spout, so you cannot mislay it! Dawn said “The two handles are perfect for handling. You can tip the can forward and put the spout wherever you want it, but until you press the button, no fuel will come out.”

The Flo Control Professional Fuel Can will retail at £24.99 and is available from www.flocontrol.co.uk, where you can also register a trade enquiry.

Dawn Bone
Flow Control (GB) Ltd
7, Argyle Rd
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5SB
Tel: 01983 822588
Email: dawn@nucan.co.uk
BLACK JULY: accidents on the increase

When the latest provisional work related fatal injury statistics were launched in July this year they showed a rise in fatalities. The Health and Safety Commission (HSC) chair Sir Bill Callaghan said that the loss of lives was unacceptable and issued a fresh challenge to industry to place safety at the top of its priorities and do more to protect the workforce. Sir Bill said, “It is disappointing to see that the overall number of deaths has risen. We have worked hard with industry and trade unions over the past few years to bring the number down. Behind every one of these numbers was a man or a woman, with a life, friends and family. Despite all the negative stories written and told about over-bureaucracy and banning ‘fun’, in reality trying to stop the tragedies we are talking about today is what health and safety is all about.”

The latest statistics suggest that the provisional figure for the number of workers fatally injured in 2006/07 is 241 and this corresponds to a rate of fatal injury of 0.80 per 100 000 workers. In 2005/06, the finalised figures were 217 fatalities corresponding to 0.72 per 100 000; these were the lowest annual figures on record. This indicates an overall increase of 11 per cent since the last year. Although a long-term downward trend is still clear, the rate of decrease has slowed over the last 15 years and there has been very little change in the overall rate over the last five years.

Of the main industrial sectors, construction has the highest number of fatal injuries and accounts for 31% of the total fatal injuries to workers. Other industries such as agriculture, waste and recycling and issues such as protection of vulnerable workers, particularly migrant workers also pose significant challenges.

HSE’s internal monitoring systems had signaled an increase in fatalities in construction and so the unvalidated statistics collected through the year has led to plans to address the areas of concern. To tackle the level of fatalities in the construction sector HSE has confirmed continuing focus on its inspection programme, targeting the refurbishment and repair sectors as these sectors in particular have seen an increase in fatal injuries. HSE will also be working very closely with stakeholders to address the problem to rising fatalities.

HSE Chief Executive Geoffrey Podger added to this message saying, “Those who are putting the lives of their workforce at risk should know that HSE takes this very seriously. In the past year we have approved 25% more prosecutions than the year before and our inspectors have served 1000 more enforcement notices. No one should believe that they can get away with serious breaches of health and safety.”
At the end of a briefing event Sir Bill reiterated his message, "I have to remind you that safety is ultimately the responsibility of those who manage and direct companies and those who work for them. Today’s statistics are disappointing and distressing but improvements can still be made. They must be made. HSC/E is taking action. The ball now lies firmly in the industry’s court."

In many areas there have been some real improvements compared with statistics from last year, and despite the figures announced, the long term fatal-injury trends are still downward. The real challenge for HSE and the industry now is to move on from the plateau of the last five years, renew efforts and revive the major gains made in previous years.

**HEADLINE STATISTICS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Sector</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Rate per 100,000 workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Industries</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extractive and utility supply</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**An alternative spin**

When considering the provisional work related fatal injury statistics, it is apparent that some of the statistics can be examined from several alternative perspectives.

Consider the HSE news quote: “Of the main industrial sectors, construction has the highest total of fatal injuries and accounts for 31% of all fatal injuries to workers. Other industries such as agriculture, waste and recycling and issues such as protection of vulnerable workers, particularly migrant workers also pose significant challenges.”

Look at the ratio ‘fatalities per 100,000 workers’ and you will clearly see that agriculture, forestry and fishing actually have a base rate of fatalities over double that of construction; the extractive and utilities industries are also higher.

So for example, consider that Industry [A] with 2 fatalities per 10 people employed (20%) would be far worse than Industry [B] with 10 fatalities per 100 people employed (10%). Using the stats cited above Industry [B] would be responsible for 83% of fatalities even though industry [A] had double the rate (20%).

Whilst these figures must be reported upon (and HSE do do a first class job here), single yearly values are of limited value since it is the ‘underlying trend per 100,000’ over a period of time that really counts as it allows for the size of the workforce. Also, raw fatality data is not the best means of analysing and reporting upon the data.
A profile of Training Express Group

Based in the South West of England the Training Express Group was formed in 2006, creating an umbrella organisation for the two companies Training Express Ltd and NVQ Assets Ltd. The founding company Training Express was established in 1998 to provide skills training and assessment in the construction, industrial and land-based sectors. Unlike most training providers the company is not sector specific but uses plant and machinery as the ‘thread’ which weaves through the different industry sectors – this is the focus for its marketing strategy.

Collaboration for the benefit of the customer and the sharing of best practice is at the heart of the organisation. It created the term ‘co-operation’ as a way of bringing a true partnering philosophy to the business, enabling long term benefits for their clients, whether in carrying out development, identifying and bidding for funding or in delivery methodology.

Added value is an essential ingredient in the competitive environment of training. It has never been the philosophy of Training Express to just sell training. It strives to give added value with advice and guidance, accessibility, and signposting. A new data driven website allows companies and individuals, through their members’ area, to view their learning logs and achievements, post job vacancies and seek career opportunities as well as search for a training package that best fits the clients’ needs.

Innovation underpins the vision and approach of Training Express and this is demonstrated by the extensive use of e-assessment, the development of NVQ paperless portfolios and blended learning programmes. Indeed, it was the collaboration, through technical guidance and support, that Training Express offered to OPERC on the mapping of S/NVQ awards against OPERC-Safetynet test questions that won them a prestigious prize from OPERC for their outstanding contribution to safety.

Mr Barry Robinson, MBE, OPERC Chief Examiner said “As founder members of OPERC, Chris Jones and his wife Carol have always exhibited a keen interest to involve themselves and wider industry in the development and sharing of best practice. They are a credit to the industry.

Mr Graham Eaves, OPERC President said “Their contribution to OPERC-Safetynet has ensured its future success for generations to come.”

For more information, readers should contact: Training Express Group, Unit 10 87 Trowbridge Road, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 1EG. Tel: 01225 863 963, Web: www.trainingexpress.co.uk
JB Sales International Limited, a known New Zealand based company, recently announced its distribution of a new innovative fully automatic light weight coupler to the UK and Ireland, assisted by CJM Engineering, a Northern Ireland based company.

JB Sales International Limited are recognised as “the pioneers of the quick hitch concept”. From the first innovation of quick hitch engineering to the new product range they continue to develop attachment solutions for industry. They state that the new quick hitch concept of the multi coupler differs from the standard coupler technology in 3 main ways:

1. The JB coupler is cast in steel, with material four times stronger than mild steel, and has the lowest centres in the market, increasing breakout force by over 16%.

2. The low profile design makes the coupler lighter and gives the machine better stability at long reach

3. The auto lock mechanism locks the front pin facing the driver and only has two moving parts. Being free from springs and ratchets makes it one of the safest, most reliable systems on the market.

There are a full range of cast hitches to suit excavators ranging from 4.5 to 45 Tonnes.

Some of the many unique features of the JB Multi-Coupler cited include the following:

VERSATILITY
• Connects to all buckets in the same weight class, regardless of make.
• Low profile design, improving breakout force

SAFETY
• Independent full proof safety lock

STRENGTH
• Cast in steel grade A5 @ 600MPa
• Tested to twice capability requirements

QUALITY
• Built to ISO9001
• TS – 16949 standards
• 3 year warranty on cast components
• Patented worldwide

With a local distribution network, full 3 year warranty on cast components, backup and full training by experienced technicians this product range offers:

• increased breakout force
• weight 36% lighter than conventional couplers
• rigorous safety features
• patented one step locking system
• a back up safety system
• connection to all attachments
• extensive fuel savings
• full local distribution, service and support

For further information please contact:
JB Sales UK, CJM Engineering Limited, Unit 16B, Derryloran Industrial Estate, Sandholes Rd, Cookstown, Co Tyrone, BT80 9LU.
Tel: (+44) 0 2886763636; Fax: (+44) 0 2886766373;
Email: martina@cjmengineering.co.uk;
Web: www.jbsales.co.nz
Stokey buy Komatsu machine
Stokey Plant Hire has purchased a brand new D65PX-15 bulldozer from UK distributor Marubeni-Komatsu. Fitted with many features, Stokey (who are based in the Midlands) claims that the decision to purchase this Komatsu machine was based on value for money and availability.

Merlo introduce cab suspension
Merlo has introduced an innovative cab suspension system on their new P55.9 CS rough terrain telescopic handler which claims to herald improvements in operator comfort and safety.

Doosan-Daewoo compete on price, value and quality
The Korean forklift manufacturer Doosan-Daewoo is offering a special low price on its new range of Diesel mid-range forklift models despite maintaining a high specification. This latest news comes on the back of winning two prestigious awards from the Fork Lift Truck Association for machine safety and ergonomics.

CMPE launch new website
The Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers (CMPE) is perhaps one of the most respected trade associations within the UK. Over recent years they have actively developed new electronic resources for their members, which now includes the launch of their new website, which should provide a first class resource for members (visit: www.cmpe.co.uk).

Ensure operators understand the importance of all-round awareness!
Letters to the Editor

Do you have any views or opinions you would like to share with other readers?

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre (OPERC)
PO Box 5039
Dudley
West Midlands
DY1 9FQ

or email us quoting ‘Letters to the Editor’ to pep@operc.com

Hand-arm vibration

Why is it that we are told vibration values for one tool and when we measure these same tools on site, the vibration values are a lot higher? This whole issue is so confusing and every time you speak to someone new, they tell you about a different standard to work to. What on earth is going on and why can’t we have one simple system that gives reliable results? This situation is a mess and it needs to be sorted sooner rather than later.

Mr Andrew Guest, Larkrise Construction, Dudley

The great debate on training and competence

What is it about training and competence that is so confusing? Cards and certificates are called competence schemes when in some instances training has not been given, just assessment or a simple health and safety test. Other schemes provide no training or assessment at all! Yet the need for training has been a mandatory requirement since the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974. The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 states that operators must be competent and there are only two routes to achieve this: namely, the S/NVQ level II qualification or in-house schemes. What is the legitimacy of schemes that call themselves competence schemes and who enforces relevant schemes? The answer is industry self regulation and regulation? The answer is industry self regulation and whilst good, credible schemes flourish, so also do the less scrupulous providers. Is it not time that we had a central body to regulate industry’s training providers? One that has real enforcement power and one where all providers would sit around the table as equals?

Dr David J. Edwards, Loughborough University, Leics.

We reserve the right to edit letters.

Letters printed represent the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editors or the Off-highway Plant and Equipment Research Centre.
It's the performance of Norton's DUO EXTREME diamond blade that makes it an awesome tool without equal!

Thanks to its revolutionary segment shape, Norton's DUO EXTREME diamond blade combines fantastic performance and life with an unmatched comfort of cut in the most extreme range of applications. Segments are 15mm high for the 230mm blade and 12mm high for larger diameters. And Saint-Gobain's commitment to the highest cSa certified standards ensures these blades are the safest in the industry.

For your nearest distributor text DIAMOND followed by a space, your name and postcode to 88890.