

# ABOVE & BEYOND

**W**hile interviewing someone from a safety systems supplier recently, our discussion turned to site safety relating to loader cranes and one story in particular. My interviewee told me how one customer has a recurring issue when delivering crash barriers to motorway construction and repair sites.

Delivery on-site usually involves driving along a closed traffic lane and using a loader crane to drop off a number of crash barrier parts ready for assembly at regular intervals. This could easily be taking place alongside flows of moving traffic on the adjacent lanes. "For speed" the vehicle driver does not dock the loader crane after each drop, which triggers a loud audible alarm in the cab when the vehicle is moving. To cut the noise out, the driver will wear earphones or ear defenders.

On one particular motorway site, an undocked loader crane struck an overhead bridge, ripping the crane off the chassis and writing off the truck. Had the loader crane fallen to the other side of the vehicle, it would have gone

## Daily checks for lorry loaders go above and beyond the wheels and chassis items required of goods wagons, reports John Kendall

into a traffic lane, with potentially lethal consequences.

Would anyone who pays that little attention to their own safety and the safety of others be inclined to carry out the daily safety checks of the loader crane required by law?

Just like the daily walk-around checks on vehicle roadworthiness that need to be carried out every day, loader crane checks were designed to ensure that the crane can be operated in complete safety, with all functions operating correctly, including those of the in-built fail-safe systems.

There are effectively two sets of regulations governing the use of loader cranes: the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) and the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, (PUWER). The Health and Safety Executive has issued an approved code of practice and guidelines for LOLER. Effectively, the two sets of regulations are designed to ensure that the equipment is maintained properly, in a safe condition; that those who use it are properly trained in its use; it is accompanied by suitable health and

safety measures and used for what it was intended.

To help ensure the regulations are followed, The Association of Lorry Loader Manufacturers and Importers (ALLMI) was formed in 1978 at the request of HSE. ALLMI produces a range of useful guides and videos to help vehicle operators and their drivers to operate lorry loaders safely.

So what would be the starting point for an experienced HGV driver who has not operated a loader crane before? ALLMI technical manager Keith Sylvester said that he would start with accredited lorry loader operator training. He adds: "Not just that though. I would say there are lots of different aspects of what could make a competent crane operator. Certainly familiarisation training from an appropriate person, perhaps the crane manufacturer."

Just as for new trucks, part of the sales process of a crane is an operator tour. "A major part of the crane handover to the customer includes a formal handover carried out by one of our team of ALLMI trained instructors," advises Ian Valentine, head of sales at Palfinger UK.



***“Before handing over any new crane to customers, we deliver familiarisation sessions for all the driver operators”***

Alastair Evans

It's similar at crane rival Hiab. “Before handing over any new crane to customers, we deliver familiarisation sessions for all the driver operators,” says Hiab product manager Alastair Evans. “We can also offer ALLMI-accredited training, and we sit on the board of the organisation, so we take our responsibility as a safe lorry loader manufacturer very seriously. Our cranes have built-in safety measures which cannot be overridden by the operator, creating a much safer working environment.”

ALLMI, jointly with the Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA), has produced best practice guides on the safe use of lorry loaders, currently under revision, which includes an annexe about familiarisation training ([www.is.gd/xequka](http://www.is.gd/xequka)). Another guide offers pre-start checks ([www.is.gd/dayozu](http://www.is.gd/dayozu)). The guide, supported by ALLMI's video and other training material, will take crane novices through everything from planning a lift operation to maintenance checks and inspections. “You'd have an Appointed



Person who plans the lifts and produces lift plans which will contain guidance on the procedure”, says Sylvester.

The guide also contains information on pre-operational checks. ALLMI's video content on the safe use of lorry loaders including specific information on particular operations, such as builders' merchant, utilities and hook loader applications. Additional modules include pre-operational checks that will guide new loader operators through the regular checks needed at the beginning of each day or shift.

Every vehicle equipped with a lorry loader should carry a copy of the operator's manual for the loader fitted to

the vehicle. For instance, Hiab manuals carry the loader model and serial numbers on them so that the operator can easily cross reference to make sure that they have the correct manual for the loader fitted. Replacement manuals can be obtained from the manufacturer or supplier and electronic versions will probably be available too. Ensuring that the vehicle has the correct manual should form part of the pre-operational checks.

Hiab's Alastair Evans sums up the importance of the pre-operational checks: “Daily health and safety checks are a requirement under LOLER and PUWER regulations. They're vital for keeping the operator and people in the surrounding area safe while the machine is being used.

“The purpose of the daily checks is to identify whether work equipment can be operated safely – with any deterioration detected and remedied before it results in a health and safety risk.” **TE**



## HOW BRADFORDS TRAINS OPERATORS

Bradfords Building Supplies, the builders' merchants serving the south-west of England operates from 43 branches in the region, using a mixed fleet of DAF LF and CF rigid models with gross weights between 7.5t and 26t GVW. The fleet is equipped with Atlas loader cranes, mounted at the front or rear according to where the vehicle is based. All are fitted with modified Kinshofer grabs. Cranes are equipped with identical portable joystick controls, so that if vehicles are moved from one depot to another, the operator will be instantly familiar with the controls – good for safety and efficiency.

Even if new drivers have operated a loader crane before, they obviously need to know how to use the Atlas. Head of support services Martin Caddick says that Bradfords uses the ALLMI training video series 'The Safe Use of Lorry Loaders' as an introduction. Before they go out on the road, they practice loading goods in the yard.

Bradfords also uses the ALLMI video 'Pre-Operational Checks, using the builder's merchant module to guide drivers through the daily safety checks. Caddick has incorporated this into the operator's daily walk-around checklist. “We complete this at

the beginning and end of the shift to allow us the evening/overnight to make effective repairs, something that Atlas supports us with very well.”

When taking on a new driver with no experience of cranes, Caddick's biggest concern is to ensure that they are trained by an accredited, industry-recognised training company that knows about Atlas cranes and Bradfords' use of them.

“We try to make them understand our concerns by explaining how seriously we as an

organisation take the safety and well-being of our employees. There are no shortcuts to safety in Bradfords Building Supplies. They need to spend time with an experienced person and practice, practice, practice in a safe, no-pressure environment, like in the yard. With a lack of experience comes pressure, pressure then makes it worse and you forget to do the every-day things.”