

Lorry loader training - does one size fit all?



The flexibility of the lorry loader concept has meant that it has replaced many items of plant equipment in a variety of work situations, large and small. But can one size really fit all? Tom Wakefield reports.

The smallest, compact lorry loaders are commonly fitted to builders' pick-up trucks and vans; sometimes have a lifting capacity of less than 500 kilograms; have a fixed boom; and are manually manoeuvred with the exception of the actual lift, which is carried out using an electrically driven winch drum and cable. Contrast this with a top-of-the range lorry loader fitted to a purpose-built tractor/semi-trailer or four-axle truck.

Such equipment could have a knuckle boom with up to eight hydraulic extensions giving it a reach of 20 metres. In addition, some lorry loaders can be fitted with a fly-jib taking its reach to over 30 metres - the rated capacity of such machines could be in the order of 150 tonne/metres.

Obviously, as the complexity of the lorry loader and its hydraulic system increases, so does the

could now be working away from the vehicle. In addition to the complexity of the operator controls, with the higher rated machines, the deployment of stabiliser legs will also become more involved. This is not to say that the "compact" loaders are elementary to operate - they may appear so, but the same care and attention is still required as some do not have the more complex overload protection systems of their bigger brothers.

This demonstrates the extremes of lorry loader design, but does not show the full adaptability of the concept. Lorry loaders in their simplest form will be fitted with a hook for lifting, but there is an enormous range of attachments that can be fitted to them. The most commonly seen on our streets delivering builders' supplies is the brick grab attachment. However, there are many more attachments, such as the clamshell bucket for aggregates, timber grab for logging and auger for drilling holes. Each one of these needs its own set of specialist controls and requires a different knowledge base for its safe use.

allow operators to do just that! Once the operator has his card, even if trained on a 'compact' loader, he is theoretically free to go and operate any lorry loader. Fortunately, there are many checks and balances within the industry, the most obvious being the value



The smallest, compact lorry loaders are commonly fitted to builders' pick-up trucks and vans; sometimes have a lifting capacity of less than 500 kilograms.



Palfinger's 100 tonne/metre PK 100002 Performance.

complexity of the control systems and the operator interface. With the more varied use of lorry loaders the operator may need to change his/her vantage point to carry out a safe lift, and so the normal operating positions may need to be supplemented or replaced by remote controls.

The use of remote controls requires extra vigilance on the part of the operator as he/she

So it is obvious that the term 'lorry loader' covers an extraordinary range of equipment. So would you expect to be able to use one lorry loader for all possible lifts? Of course you wouldn't. And would you expect an operator trained on one lorry loader to be able to safely operate any loader? Of course you wouldn't.

Many lorry loader training schemes do, however,

of the equipment, which is at risk in the hands of the employee - most employers will want a demonstration of the operator's competence on the equipment before he/she is let loose.

But wouldn't it be simpler if when an operator was trained on a lorry loader his card stated what range of equipment he is trained to operate? This is what ALLMI thought when it devised its training scheme. Operators who go through this training receive a card that states clearly what categories of equipment they have been trained to safely use. The ALLMI training scheme categories are grouped in a matrix according to the attachment used and the rated capacity of the loader crane. Many operators are trained on the scheme to use more than one attachment and, having qualified to operate loaders in one rated capacity category, are automatically qualified to operate machines in a lower rated category (providing they have been familiarised with the machine). This type of training scheme gives the employer, the employee and their customers peace of mind, as 'one size' really does not fit all when it comes to lorry loader training!