



FEATURE 6, JUNE 2006

AA Utility Arboriculture Group Quarterly Update

UAG gets New Chairman

Paul Hornby succeeds George Mc Robbie to the chair of the UAG's Core Group. Many thanks to George, a founder member and first chairman of the Group. George's drive and enthusiasm and an ability to see the bigger picture was a catalyst to the formation of the Group, the formation of its Terms of Reference and the establishment of well over 100 Virtual Group members throughout the UK and Ireland.

Paul, also a founder member takes the chair at an exciting time – just after the Group's first exhibition at the Energy Networks Association's annual safety conference and when four more seats on the Core Group have been created to add to the breadth and depth of interests represented. If you want to be considered for the Core Group please examine the Group's Terms of Reference (www.trees.org.uk type key word 'Utility') and submit a brief CV to the Group's secretary Halley McCallum halm@btsgroupuk.com. The process of election to the Core Group (which is a sub group of the AA's Professional Committee) is documented in the Terms of Reference.

Progress is being made with the Lantra Awards suite of training packages (UA1 through to UA5) which correlates to the five NPTC Units of Competence for Utility work. The Group is aware of the issues that reassessment causes to those in this sector of the industry and has been advised that progress is being made to conclude this matter soon. There will, of course, be a strong Utility Arboriculture section to the National Arboriculture Conference in York in October.

Mobile Elevated Works Platform (MEWPs) – The Pros and Cons of Hiring or Buying.

Views and advice from David Walker – someone who has “been there, done that”.

We all agree that they are much safer and in certain circumstances make a job more cost effective, but what happens when things go wrong? Here are some things you should consider when deciding to hire or buy.

To Hire

Hiring has got to be the easiest option, no hassle with sales reps trying to earn their crust, that won't go away after initial enquiry (but if you are experiencing hassle with sales reps then you are talking to the wrong companies!). Have you all heard of the Construction Plant Hire Association (CPA) Model Terms and Conditions for the Hiring of Plant, and moreover, do you know what they mean?

The CPA in Brief.

If you break the machine, they can charge you for down time per day at 2/3rds of the daily hire rate; this is a standard seven days per week not five. It is very important to note here that many manufacturers are not based in England and parts often have to come from abroad.

It is very difficult to insure against the CPA hire terms and conditions.

They have to and will charge you for every tiny lump including another LOLER check and damage assessment by professionals.

You are responsible for the machine until it is actually collected after the job.

Beware of these conditions as they cost a small fortune if enforced and hire companies do action them on a regular basis. Also always check the training required, a standard MEWP ticket does not cover specific machines and when things go wrong all of a sudden they say, “ah but have you had training and certification on this particular type of machine?”. The induction given on handover is not sufficient under the dreaded CPA.

To Buy

More cost effective long term but check out the following

Do spend the extra money and get the electrics and pipes put inside the boom or even better under suitable protection with good access. Call out charges are high for broken pipe repair on site and even higher if the hose bursts inside the boom as then the whole boom has to be dismantled – this is a workshop job and can take many days.

Note: The main advantage to having exposed items is the ability to be able inspect more easily on a daily basis to spot potential problems. The boom is not a jousting rod and care must be taken.

Ask for references.

In event of a failure does the equipment have a manual release valve to get the operators down?

Ensure you know how to operate the manual release valve, in the event of equipment failure. All machines must have an emergency descent system under EN 280 – MEWP design regulations.

Abseiling out of the bucket to avoid freezing to death in open winds is not generally on someone's CV.

Note: The rings you attach your lanyard to are only designed for restrain, not suspension.

In event of complete breakdown who can come out to you quickly so it doesn't get left on site for the vandals to get at?

Where is your local LOLER inspector.

LOLER examinations need to be carried out at least every 6 months.

Some machine suppliers will carry out examinations on site.

Staff Certification: research this thoroughly as there are lots of options.

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