



Information Item	On top of it!
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### On top of it!

*Communication has seen us through recent months, but it's also what keeps us safe when navigating suspended slabs and underground car parks. The Crane Association of New Zealand's Past President, Scott McLeod, reminds us of the importance of protocol in this month's The Technical Corner.*

Scott McLeod recalls reading a news item detailing how a nine-day-old, 250-ton Liebherr crane fell through the first floor of a building, and he can reel off dozens more accounts of similar events, many of which come down to an innocent mistake or those that, even now, dodge protocol.

"In Mount Maunganui there's a building called the Twin Towers, which has an extensive underground car park with retaining walls that go right to the footpath. On this site there is an area where you can cause minimal disruption to the public, but little do you know that the spot is completely suspended and is not built for the pressures of a crane."

There are steps you can take to reduce the pressure, like setting 45 degrees off so that the crane isn't applying pressure within the Zone of Influence, but you don't know what you don't know, which is why it's crucial to do your research well before arriving on site.

Scott recalls: "I was on site with recent earthworks and the crane fell through a manhole cover, which we all thought was solid ground." That's right, even the seasoned professionals don't get it right all the time, which is why tools like the [Crane Association Lift Plan](#) exist.

"The Lift Plan creates a relationship between different parties and their responsibilities to ensure that everyone understands what they have to do. If you follow the checks listed in the Lift Plan, these things shouldn't happen. It's all about communication."

The Health & Safety at Work Act also sets out a legal requirement to "consult, cooperate and coordinate to ensure the health and safety of everyone" when more than one company is working on site, so there really is no excuse not to adhere.

Scott advises: "You want to make sure you have all the information you need when first looking at the job, not when you're starting up on site, which requires research." Adding: "Always look for underground services like waste water, storm water and power to make sure you don't cause damage. People don't think of this immediately in scope when asking about underground hazards."

There are some tell-tale signs of a suspended platform or underground car park, like multi-storey buildings, not to mention any port in New Zealand where you'll almost certainly be sitting on a suspended slab. In any case, you must communicate with the client to find out what's safe and, when there's uncertainty, speak to your local council to attain drawings of the building or find someone that knows the site.

"It comes down to education, discussion and awareness from planning to dispatch to arrival on site, and following a Lift Planning process."

Scott advises that everyone also read [Crane Stability on Site \(C703\)](#) courtesy CIRIA, which talks about crane stability on site. Section 2, Part H of the [Crane Safety Manual](#) from CANZ also informs about zones of influence, checking with an appropriate qualified person, and locations of cellars/basements.

"If you even consider taking a shortcut, you're essentially playing Russian Roulette and it's not worth it. There's only one way to navigate suspended platforms and it means putting in the work, educating yourself, following a process such as the Crane Association's Lift Plans, and communicating effectively."

Scott McLeod  
Crane Association of New Zealand Immediate Past President

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