



Information Item	Lift plans' sketching of hazards key to safety
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Lift plans' sketching of hazards key to safety

*The Crane Association of New Zealand's Past President, Scott McLeod, discusses what many in the industry are conscious of but must be vigilante about any way in this month's **The Technical Corner**.*

Over the years, Scott McLeod has turned down work because of a particular job's inherent risks – mainly, the proximity to power lines.

But even more concerning was the willingness with which other companies took those contracts.

"It's important to stick to our industry's guidelines," the McLeod Cranes & Hiabs Managing Director says.

"If we all stick to the same guidelines, we all are – as an industry – better off for it. For example, if we always work within our Approved Code of Practice for Cranes and tell our customers the same thing, then we're all operating on a level playing field."

The Code states that for overhead electrical power lines, every operator of a mobile crane working in the vicinity of live power lines "shall ensure that the distance between any live overhead electric line and any part of any mobile plant or load carried shall be at least 4.0 metres".

"Remembering also that power lines may move in the wind, or sag more on hot days as they heat up due to thermal expansion. So, what you start the day with may change."

Unless the operator has received written consent from the overhead electric line owner allowing a reduced distance.

Additionally, the Code states that any mobile crane work carried out in the vicinity of overhead electric power lines "shall be conducted in accordance with the Electricity Regulations 1997 (and any associated amendments) and NZECP 34:2001 – the New Zealand Electrical Code of Practice for Electrical Safe Distances".

As industry hazards go, power lines possess the highest risk. And like other risks, this hazard's consequences can have fatal outcomes.

"That's where the lift plan is brilliant because there is a section within it that asks you to sketch the hazards," Scott says.

"If people are planning their lifts before lifting their boom – sketching out the hazards – then you're engaging a different part of the brain."

“We care about what the sketch does to your thinking and its ability to raise your awareness levels – that may save your life. That’s the most powerful part of the lift plan – not only that, but you might identify other hidden hazards too.

“And in completing that process, it’s akin to removing the blinkers from a horse’s eyes and enables the person to review their surroundings.

The lift plan is one of the industry’s most powerful tools in mitigating the effects of hazards.

And so common are power lines’ presence near jobs that Scott says he’d be surprised if a company hasn’t been involved in some form of incident.

“We’ve had drivers who have set up and assumed – the mother of all stuff ups – somebody else should have looked for power lines instead of taking the time and effort to complete the lift plan properly.

“And as I said, the consequences are at the high end of the scale – one or more fatalities are quite probable in that situation.

“So, sometimes it’s just not worth it. Stick to the rules of the industry, everyone will be better off. The Crane Association is about lifting professionals, not lifting cowboys.”

Scott McLeod

CANZ Past President

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