



<b>Information Item</b>	<b>Exclusion zones key to mitigating worst case scenarios</b>
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### Exclusion zones key to mitigating worst case scenarios

New Zealand’s various industries each contains an element of risk, none more so than the crane industry.

However, Crane Association of New Zealand Immediate Past President, Scott McLeod, says industry players have come on leaps and bounds to mitigate risks, control hazards, and enforce the three ‘C’s’; Consult, Cooperate and Coordinate.

Exclusion zones are but one of a crane business’ premiere tools in creating a safe work environment, he says.

“It puts a highly visible line in the sand and ensures someone who wants to cross that will talk to whoever drew that line, to figure out a problem and consult, cooperate, and coordinate.

“Because without one – a line in the sand, an exclusion zone – it’s a free for all. Controlling your workspace is essential to knowing what’s going on inside that space and that everybody inside it has had a conversation and agrees to the rules.”

The Association has a number of resources for designating exclusions zones on site; stopping people from entering the area established around cranes and adjoining vicinities, and being injured by the crane or falling objects.

The size of the exclusion zone should be based on a risk assessment – as a general “rule of thumb”, barricading an exclusion zone should encompass the size of the footprint of the load, plus one metre outwards for every two metres of lift height.

Additionally, where the zone is a public footpath or roadway, permission should be sought from the relevant authority, and people should be safely directed onto an alternative path.

This method of control has always been part and parcel throughout the crane industry’s history, Scott says, albeit sporadically in decades gone by.

However, since the introduction of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, methods of controlling sites have been firmed up.

“If you mark off a good exclusion zone, and then say to anyone who comes inside of it that they have to sign on to a lift plan – it creates a living document that everyone understands how we’re controlling the hazards associated to the lift,” Scott says.

Yet, on odd occasions, the issue of breaching said zones is still an issue.

“The biggest issue is people ignoring exclusion zones, not knowing what they’re about, or how to interact with them. So, in other words, people don’t often know to go see the crane operator to learn the hazards and controls,” he says.

“For example, it’s like the plumber who has decided to complete some work in the top floor while we’re lifting up roofing iron.

“He’s seen the exclusions zone tape but can’t see anything going on, so he ducks under it and starts working. We start slewing around and notice he’s there, but why?”

While general construction industry knowledge about exclusion zones is on the up, it never hurts to continue dialogue around its importance.

“It’s an ongoing journey, it’s an ongoing conversation. We’re learning to be better as an industry on controlling the risks surrounding what we do, and imparting that with others,” Scott says.

“Ensuring everyone’s safety on a site is not a new thing, we’ve been doing it since day one. But what we’ve done now is we’re associating it to lift plans for the betterment of people on the site.”

Scott says employing diligent health and safety practices can be costly – such as downtime due to events and investigations – but ultimately, that is minor compared to someone becoming injured.

“Does health and safety practices slow the job down? I don’t reckon so. If everyone agrees what needs to happen on the job, then the job tends to go quicker and smoother. Because we’re all paddling in the same direction.”

Scott McLeod

Immediate Past President

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