

TO ALL CRANE INTEREST GROUP MEMBERS IMPORTANT NOTICE

On the 11th September 2003 the Crane Interest Group held an Open Meeting at Birmingham. At that meeting Members were informed of the revision to the Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003 (STGO) which took effect on the 25th August 2003. The following is an update on that revision.

Background

All companies involved in the hire or operation of road going mobile cranes are well aware of the confusion caused by the previously grey definitions in the STGO regulations and the Construction and Use Regulations whereby mobile cranes were classified as part of Engineering Plant. Cranes were restricted in two key areas, speed, and weight. These restrictions caused considerable operational problems and our Members were regularly falling foul of the sometimes-unworkable regulations.

About ten years ago, regulations re-classified certain vehicles as Heavy Locomotives and we, in the industry, thought that this would help the mobile crane hire companies, particularly with regard to travelling speeds on the Public Highway. Alas, no. Whilst some Police Forces viewed Mobile Cranes as Heavy Locomotives, the vast majority did not. In time, we were back where we started.

Problem Areas

1. Mobile Cranes (Engineering Plant) were restricted to 12 miles per hour on all roads with the exception of Motorways. Over the years, Members crane drivers have been prosecuted for going too fast and in some cases going too slowly causing disruption to following traffic. It has sometimes caused Industrial Relations problems with Crane Drivers arguing for increased travelling times despite the fact that they were regularly taking far less time to get to their destinations. This has had an impact on Member's costs.

2. Mobile Cranes were supplied to Members, by the manufacturers, with a specification sheet showing axle weights of invariably 12 tonnes per axle and a manufacturers VIN plate to match. This was to comply with certain European manufacturing regulations. In reality; the vast majority of these cranes could not operate at these weights in travelling order. Even some of the lower capacity cranes exceeded 12 tonnes per axles once the normal operational equipment was put on the crane. Fundamental equipment to get the job done. Equipment such as; -

A tackle box
Lifting chains/slings
Outrigger mats/sleepers
Basic swing around fly jibs

The Police often stopped Member's cranes. Even though the crane had been correctly notified to the authorities, (i.e. routed at weights in excess of 12 tonnes per axle) it could be weighed and if the crane had a VIN plate showing 12 tonnes per axle, the Crane Hire company could be prosecuted for "overloading the vehicle". **This was a ridiculous situation and one that had to be resolved.** In the interim, the CPA advised Members to remove the VIN plates to avoid this anomaly. Transport solicitors had informed the CPA that at that time, Mobile Cranes were not technically required to fit a VIN plate.

The Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003. Effective from the 25th August 2003.

For over ten years, the Department for Transport (DfT) had been planning to revise the Special Types General Order. (STGO) Two years ago a consultation document was issued and the CPA Crane Interest Group, represented by Steve Cooke (Ainscough Crane Hire) and Colin Wood, became heavily involved in the process. Several meetings took place with the DfT and FEM Mobile Cranes, the body representing the crane manufacturers.

On the 25th August 2003 the revision came into force. This revision, amongst other things, sought to remove the grey areas and anomalies affecting road going Mobile Cranes.

Key Changes

To enable Members to readily follow the changes it is recommended that they purchase a copy of the revision, which is in booklet form and costs £7.50 per copy.

It is available from: -

The Stationery Office (TSO)
PO Box 29
Norwich 1GN

Telephone Orders 0870 6005522

This revision is available on the DfT website but unfortunately the pages are not numbered and do not correspond with the booklet. The pages numbers detailed below only refer to the booklet.

Mobile Cranes now effectively fall into one of four categories.

Category A (Page 36 Table 6)

Number of axles	Minimum distance between outermost axles	Maximum gross weight of crane
2	3 metres	20,000 kilograms
3	5 metres	30,000 kilograms
4	6 metres	36,000 kilograms

Category B (Page 36 Clause 31.1) Cranes up to 12,500 kilograms per axle

Category C (Page 36 Clause 32.1) Cranes up to 16,500 kilograms per axle
(Maximum gross vehicle weight 150,000 kilograms)

Engineering Plant (Page 32 Clause 2.7) If any of the crane's axle weights exceeds 16,500 kilograms the Mobile Crane will be classed as Engineering Plant. (Defined as Slow Plant, Page 41 Clause 20.2 and Page 42 Clause 25.1 and 2 and Table 11)

Plate Requirements

Under the new revision, Mobile Cranes will have to have a plate fitted detailing the category of the crane. The manufacturers will be supplying these revised plates that will need to be fitted by the 1st December 2004. (Page 3 Clause 1.3)

Members are reminded not to have the original plates on the crane unless they are satisfied that the actual axle weights, in travelling order, are below those detailed on the original plate.

Abnormal Load Notification Requirements (Police and Highway and Bridge Authorities)

In essence, the notification requirements have not changed. Even some category A cranes may need to be notified to the Highway and Bridge Authorities.

However, Members should be aware that the actual indemnity forms (annual or otherwise) should now make reference to the STGO revision. (Page 55 of the booklet refers)

Revised Speed Restrictions (Please note the amendments to these speed limits detailed further on in the document with regard to tyre limitations)

Speed Restrictions for Category A, B, or C mobile cranes (Page 37 Table 7)

Category of mobile crane	Motorway	Dual Carriageway	Other Roads
Category A	60 mph	50 mph	40 mph
Category B	50 mph	45 mph	40 mph
Category C	40 mph	35 mph	30 mph

Speed Restrictions under Engineering Plant (Page 41 Clause 20.1)

Mobile cranes, classified as Engineering Plant, must not travel on roads at speeds exceeding; a) 30 miles per hour on a Motorway; or
b) 12 miles per hour on any other road

IMPORTANT

The above speed limits for Category A, B and C Mobile Cranes and Engineering Plant are the legally approved speed limits under the new revision. HOWEVER, The manufacturers of the cranes have specified that the speed limits of the cranes must be further regulated by the restrictions imposed by the tyre manufacturers BASED ON THE TYPE OF TYRE AND THE WEIGHT IMPOSED ON THOSE TYRES. These amended speed limits must be made available to the crane driver by means of a chart in the crane cab detailing the tyre type and the actual maximum axle weight in travelling order.

The CPA are arranging a meeting with the Crane Manufacturers to clarify the complicated scenario regarding the different makes and sizes of tyre. Members who have odd ball tyres on their cranes will need to contact the manufacturer to find out the maximum speed limits for those tyres.

Summary

We feel that despite the amendments for the tyre related speed adjustments; this revision is a major step forward for the Crane Hire Industry. These new regulations reflect the real world situation with regard to operational travelling speeds and weights.

The CPA is grateful for the practical approach taken by both the Department for Transport and FEM Mobile Cranes, representing the crane manufacturers, to bring the regulations up to date without in any way compromising the over-riding road safety requirements. In particular we would like to thank Steve Cooke for his continued support on this issue.

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Chairman of CPA Crane Interest Group