

Hook, load and safer

A round-up of news and recent issues, including: restricting remote control operation distances, new models that extend product ranges, automatic sheet covering systems for skips, the return of TH White, new Hiab product warranties and a Volvo off-the-peg offer. Steve Banner has the detail

Operating a skip loader using a remote control should, on the face of it, be as uncontroversial as it is beneficial. Standing away from the vehicle, the driver can load and unload the skip more safely and work more productively.

Unfortunately the popularity of remotes is itself creating a potentially serious safety problem, argues Steve Price, vice-chairman of CHEM, the Container Handling Equipment Manufacturers' Association, a 20-strong group of primarily waste industry truck body suppliers (www.chem.uk.com).

He says: "The difficulty is that there is no agreed standard for them, which creates the risk that somebody could use one even if they're 60m away." Standing at such a distance from the action means that operators may not be able to spot a hazard until it is

too late. As a consequence, CHEM is working on a standard, to be published by mid-2017, which will restrict the range of a remote control to no more than 10m (for IRTE's own site safety guidance, see www.tinyurl.com/15w86f8).

Price is also sales and marketing director of Boughton Group. Part of Skan Group Holdings, Boughton Engineering, which sells nearly 260 skip loaders a year, launched the PR18 Power-Reach skip loader (picture, p40) for 18-tonne applications nearly four years ago. As its name implies, Power-Reach PR18's telescopic lifting arms extend from 2.8 to 4.1m; this capability also allows them to lift skips from up to

a metre below ground level. They can also be fitted with scales from Vehicle Weighing Solutions. More recently the PR18 has been joined by the PR12.

Boughton offers hook loaders for 26- and 32-tonne chassis, though 8x4 eight-wheelers running at the heavier weight account for around 90% of its 200-plus annual sales. "However, because operators may have to go further to tip, we're seeing increased interest in close-coupled drawbar combinations running at 44 tonnes that can transport two containers at a time," says Price. And Boughton vehicles self-level when they have to venture on to uneven ground.

Capacity extensions aside, customers do not welcome radical change, argues Price, and see the fact that the basic design of Boughton's hook loader has not changed for many years as a virtue rather than a drawback. All they want is something that is robust, simple to maintain and easy to fix if it goes wrong.

Marrel hook loaders offer similar features, says Apart's Services managing director, David Wilson. His West Midlands firm has been distributing the French



manufacturer's hook and skip loaders in the UK for nearly five years. More recent changes include the introduction of up-rated rams and a better picking-up point for the hook, he says.

IT'S A COVER UP

The automatic sheet covering systems on hook and skip loaders are particularly popular: Price says that Boughton's sheeting system, known as Intercova and featuring arms that drop down into the side raves, is specified by 95% of customers.

But they often bear the brunt of the wear and tear caused by vigorous operation. Wilson of Aparts says: "Nine times out of 10, it's the sheeting system that suffers damage because it hits everything from tree branches to bridges."

Another risk is that whoever is at the wheel will attempt to operate the hook while the sheet is still in place. To prevent this from happening, Boughton's automatic system features an interlock, along with side arm operation designed to comply with UK maximum-width regulations introduced more than 20 years ago. Much damage can be prevented by the driver remaining alert to the risk and listening out for the warning systems that are typically fitted.

In addition to Boughton and Aparts, and competitors including Harsh and Hyva, a familiar name has returned to the market. Last November saw TH White resume its role as UK distributor for Palfinger's hook and skip loaders. Although its relationship with Palfinger goes back to 1990, the company - which also distributes the Austrian firm's loader cranes under the Palfinger and Epsilon brands - lost the hook and skip loader agency in 2012 to Palfinger aerial work platform dealer King. Following



the acquisition of that business by HGV contract supplier HW Martin in summer 2016, Palfinger returned the sales contract to TH White. It was good timing; the Devizes, Wiltshire site had recently doubled production capacity, extending its workshops and including a paint shop, and has now appointed two new sales staff as well to help handle the expected business.

Last year, Palfinger launched a 20-tonne capacity Isotip hook loader that can handle 20ft ISO containers along with standard containers measuring from 4.8m to 6.3m in length. Just before Christmas it unveiled a Palcover sheeting system, maximum height of 5.5m, able to cover bins ranging from 5m to 7.2m in length.

Swedish rival Hiab has been busy as well. It also introduced a new 20-tonne hook loader in 2016 under the Multilift Optima banner, and lightness and speed of operation are two of the claimed benefits (pictured, p39).

At the same time it extended its Multilift Futura line-up of skip loaders. The Futura 8 is intended for 12- and 15-tonne gross weight chassis. Safety features include the provision of a hydraulic container lock, hydraulic safety interlocks and side stops, and the control system can be upgraded after purchase.

Says Hiab's head of sales for demountables Hans Ekman: "We've

made retrofitting easy. You only have to pay for what you need when you need it."

Since January, all new Multilift hook and skip loaders come with a two-year worldwide warranty; selected models also offer a five-year structural warranty. The two-year package encompasses wear parts, including internal and external seals and hydraulic hoses and even the paint, assuming the customer has selected the zinc primer option.

For customers more worried about today than tomorrow, for example businesses in the waste industry that need a skip loader quickly if they win a new contract, some truck manufacturers have put together off-the-peg packages. Among them is Volvo. It recently supplied a quartet of FL 18-tonners fitted with Hyva Hyvalift NG2012XL skip handling gear to Dunmow Waste Management of Chelmsford, Essex. Complete with independent telescopic extending arms, Hyva's Autosheet system and remote operation, the Hyvalift equipment has a lifting capacity of from 5.4 to 12 tonnes depending on arm positioning.

Dunmow managing director, Sam Malins, states that this approach to acquisition was the right one. He says: "Ordering these Volvos as complete units without having to deal with a separate bodybuilder for the skip loader element simplified the entire process. It let us concentrate on the business of collecting and recycling construction, demolition and household clearance waste" - in other words the activities that make money for the company. [IE](#)

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