

# SAFETY COMES FIRST



**TO MARK ITS EXPANSION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE INTERNATIONAL POWERED ACCESS FEDERATION (IPAF) RECENTLY HELD ITS FIRST SEMINAR IN SINGAPORE, WHICH HIGHLIGHTS SAFETY AND BEST PRACTICE IN THE USE OF MOBILE ELEVATING WORK PLATFORM (MEWP). IT ATTRACTED A FULL CAPACITY AUDIENCE OF MORE THAN 120, SIGNIFYING A STRONG INTEREST IN WORLD-CLASS OPERATOR TRAINING IN THE REGION.**

**I**PAF entered Southeast Asia at the start of 2011, with a regional office in Singapore. It is now part of the working group that is drafting a Singapore standard for MEWP. This working group is coordinated by the standards body, Spring Singapore, which falls under the remit of the Singaporean Technical Committee on Safety and Health involving Use of Equipment.

IPAF is also part of the MEWP Interest Group run by the Occupational Safety and Health Division of the Ministry of Manpower (MoM). This interest group aims to enhance the competency of MEWP operators. In addition, an IPAF Singapore Country Council is currently being formed, which will focus on issues of concern to its local members.

IPAF now has 15 members in Singapore and six in Malaysia. There are two IPAF approved training centres (ATCs) in Singapore and in Malaysia, a few companies are undergoing the process of becoming IPAF ATCs (*see IPAF members and approved training centres in Southeast Asia, p58*). One of Singapore's IPAF ATCs, BS Technology, has also become the first MoM Accredited Training Provider for MEWP (*see Enhancing safety, p58*).

"When we decided to come to Southeast Asia, we knew there is a demand for training in the use of powered access equipment. But we didn't expect the response would be much, much better. This shows that the region is taking safety seriously and



IPAF's first seminar in Southeast Asia was successfully held in Singapore in April, attracting more than 120 participants.

ready for high quality training that meets the global standard. This is a good sign for the industry," said Raymond Wat, regional manager of IPAF (SEA) Pte Ltd.

The first IPAF seminar in Southeast Asia was aimed to underline the significant aspects in the use MEWP, which would lead to greater safety for the operators and ultimately benefit the industry. It was attended by more than 120 participants comprising professionals in the region who included authorised examiners, inspectors for MEWP; safety officers and occupational safety and health (OSH) personnel; MEWP rental companies; MEWP service companies; MEWP owners/users; and MEWP service engineers.

"The number of participants was surprisingly high, considering this is our first seminar in this region," added Mr Wat.

The seminar was presented by Rupert Douglas-Jones, IPAF international training manager, who is a MEWP certified instructor and oversees the administration and implementation of the IPAF training programme. He represents IPAF on various committees (PAIG, ACWAHT, the British standards committees BS8454 and BS8460) and is instrumental in developing many of IPAF's technical guidance notes. He also has operating experience on the vast majority of MEWP makes and models, as well as fleet management experience.

## In-service inspection

Users of MEWPs are certainly aware that familiarisation with the machines is a must before they operate them. The question is, how much should they know?

“The machines should not even be used unless they have a current in-service inspection report,” said Mr Douglas-Jones, delivering his first presentation on ‘Thorough Examination of MEWPs.’

“In-service inspection is not the same as daily checks, weekly inspections or maintenance inspection. In-service inspection is a thorough examination, which is aimed to test the machine, to find the faults.”

He explained that in-service inspection includes visual inspection/examination, functional testing, and measurement as necessary. The main objective is to verify whether the equipment (in this case MEWP) is operating as intended; ensure that defects identified in the previous inspection report have received attention; check if warning notices are correctly fixed and legible; assess the correct function of all safety devices; identify defects or weaknesses that could compromise that safe use of the equipment; specify timescales within which identified defects or weaknesses need to be rectified; and if necessary, specify limitations on the use of the equipment.

Mr Douglas-Jones further highlighted that in-service inspection must be carried out



From left: Raymond Wat, regional manager of IPAF (SEA) Pte Ltd; and Rupert Douglas-Jones, IPAF international training manager.

by a competent person, whose duty is to give advice on defects and timescales for repairs as well as provide a report to the users.

“The competent person should have appropriate practical and theoretical knowledge, as well as experience of the lifting equipment to be thoroughly examined. He/she may be required to draw up and authenticate an examination scheme and subsequently modify it in the light of changes.”

It is also important that “the competent person does not get distracted when

conducting thorough examination, such as talking on the phone, as he/she could miss vital points.”

Mr Douglas-Jones then described how competent persons vary from region to region. They could be government inspectors (Italy); government appointed inspectors (the Netherlands, France and Sweden); competent second or third parties (the Netherlands, France, Germany, Norway, and the UK) – the second parties are usually manufacturer’s, hire’s or owner’s engineers;

## GETTING TO KNOW IPAF

The International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) promotes the safe and effective use of powered access equipment worldwide by providing technical advice and information, influencing and interpreting legislation and standards, and through its safety initiatives and training programmes.

Headquartered in the UK, IPAF is a non-profit organisation owned by its members that include manufacturers, rental companies, contractors and users. It was set up in 1983 through a merger of two associations, one for manufacturers and one for rental companies.

IPAF currently has 800 members from 30 countries including Europe, North America, Asia, Australia and South America.

The IPAF training programme for MEWP operators is certified by TÜV as conforming to ISO 18878:2004, Mobile elevating work platforms – Operator (driver) training. Training is not provided



Training makes operators aware of potential dangers and the safety measures needed to overcome these risks.

by IPAF itself, but is delivered through a network of IPAF-approved training centres, which are member manufacturers, rental companies, training institutes, instructors and users in the MEWP industry. More than 80,000 MEWP operators are trained each year through a worldwide network of over 400 IPAF-approved training centres.

Those who have successfully completed the training are awarded a safety guide, a log book, a certificate and a PAL Card (Powered Access Licence). The log book should be filled out and signed after each job to document operator experience. The PAL Card is valid for five years, after which it must be renewed. This ensures that operator knowledge and skills are kept up-to-date. The PAL Card features a photo of the holder and shows the categories of machines that he or she was trained in. It is recognised in many countries as proof of platform operator training to the highest standard.

or any second or third party who is qualified as a mechanic on the make and model of equipment inspected (USA).

The frequency of in-service inspection also differs, he said, depending on national requirements, manufacturer's advice, operation conditions and frequency of use. For example, in the US the ANSI standard requires that machines must go through an annual inspection plus three months or 150 hour inspection. In the European countries like Germany, Italy, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden, machines are to be inspected every 12 months. But in Singapore, the UK and France, machines undergo inspection every six months.

### Employer's responsibility

Another issue raised by Mr Douglas-Jones was that related to employers' responsibility, in his second presentation on 'MEWPs for Managers and Supervisors.'

"Employers should be aware of current legislation, different types and classifications of MEWPs, and the importance of correct machine selection; be able to select the correct PPE for the operator; have a greater knowledge and awareness of the safe use and operation of MEWPs; be able to identify misuse and abuse of MEWPs; and be aware of planning and maintenance considerations."

Referring to the Work at Height regulation, he said, "It is employers' responsibility to ensure that workers given the task of using work equipment receive adequate training."

However, Mr Douglas-Jones also stressed the importance of emergencies and rescue plan to prepare for when things go wrong. "Not everyone thinks of rescue plan; people don't put emphasis on what they should do when things fail. This is dangerous.

"There must be a designated (and documented) personnel on ground to lower platform by ground control panel or emergency descent system demonstrated.

"These personnel don't have to be skilled, but they have to know how to do it. All personnel in platform have to be aware of how to lower the platform in an emergency."

Speaking about Risk Assessment, Mr Douglas-Jones underlined the need of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), which includes harness and restraint lanyard and IPAF guidance; hand-held anemometer; hi-viz clothing; hard hat with chin strap; and adverse weather protection.

Giving an example of Risk Assessment, he said, "If you want people to work in cold and wet then you must keep them warm and dry – it is your judgement and your call as to when they must stop."

He also referred to the IPAF Harness Statement, "In boom type platforms, it is strongly recommended that a full body harness with an adjustable lanyard (used to provide work restraint and adjusted to be as short as possible) is used when working from a boom type MEWP. In vertical lifts, it is not normally necessary for personnel working from a vertical lift to wear fall protection equipment, other than in exceptional circumstances."

Concluding his presentation, Mr Douglas-Jones emphasised once again that safety must not be compromised, no matter what. "If you think that thorough planning, preparing the correct paperwork, safety, training, operative briefing, well maintained plant, and logistic support involved in planning, supervision and management are expensive and time consuming...try have an accident.

"The cost of human life is much more unbearable - one that cannot be replaced."



Look for the PAL Card, proof that the holder has been trained to operate platforms safely and effectively.

### IPAF MEMBERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

#### Singapore:

1. BS Technology Pte Ltd
2. Genfor Lease Pte Ltd
3. CDP Access Asia Pte Ltd
4. Manituo Asia Pte Ltd
5. JH Equipment & Services Pte Ltd
6. Aver Asia (S) Pte Ltd
7. Snorkel Asia Pacific
8. Skyjack Sales & Service
9. Aichi Corporation
10. Tanglin Corporation Pte Ltd
11. Galmon (S) Pte Ltd
12. Multistates Trading Co Pte Ltd
13. BMS Environmental Services Pte Ltd
14. Haulotte Singapore Pte Ltd
15. Modern (Singapore) Access & Equipment Pte Ltd

#### Malaysia:

1. Eastway Engineering Sdn Bhd
2. Uptop Access Sdn Bhd
3. G-Force Sdn Bhd
4. PMP Equipments Sdn Bhd
5. PMB Quick Access Sdn Bhd
6. Dex Machinery Trading Sdn Bhd

### IPAF APPROVED TRAINING CENTRES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

#### Singapore:

1. BS Technology Pte Ltd
2. Genfor Lease Pte Ltd

#### Malaysia:

Currently being processed.

## ENHANCING SAFETY

IPAF-approved training centre BS Technology, based in Singapore, has become the first Ministry of Manpower (MoM) Accredited Training Provider for MEWP. The IPAF scissor lift and boom lift operator courses provided by the company have been recognised as meeting the criteria defined by the Singapore Workplace Safety and Health Council in its Curriculum Development Advisory.

BS Technology became the first IPAF-approved training centre in Asia in 2008. The company has since won two International Awards for Powered Access (IAPAs) - for the Best New IPAF Training Centre in 2010 and the Best Marketing Campaign for IPAF Training in 2011.

Dave Ng (right), executive director of BS Technology, receiving the 2011 IAPA trophy from IPAF CEO Tim Whiteman.



## Positive response

The seminar has generated positive feedbacks from the participants, many of which started to realise how much they did not - and need - to know.

“This is a very useful seminar for the industry, especially in terms of safety when using MEWP. I think soon it will be an on-going event,” said Patrick Hong, general manager of Genfor Lease Pte Ltd. And Eric Soon, director (operations) of BMS Group also agreed, by saying that the seminar is very useful, especially for those in the supervisor level and above.

According to Klein Phua, manager of business and marketing development department at Modern (Singapore) Access Equipment Pte Ltd, a rental company, the seminar would further educate the construction industry on the appropriate use of MEWP.

“Even though Singapore is considered a mature market for the construction industry, there are still many users who don’t actually know how to operate MEWP safely.”

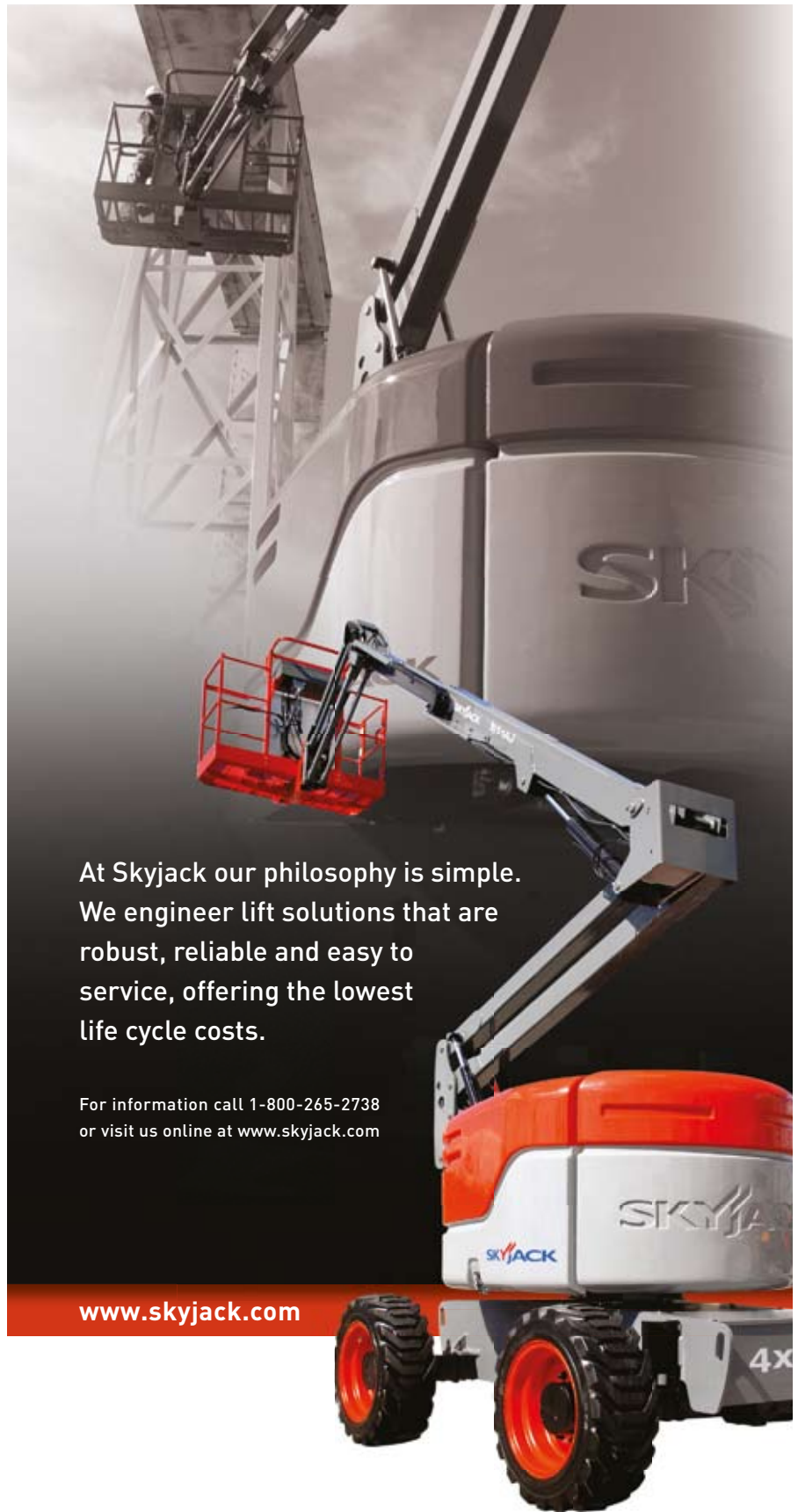
He also said that although his company provides machine training, there are still limitations on both parties: “Our training is more for familiarisation with the machine – which also includes the safety aspect. A lot of times we can’t conduct detailed training because of the short duration that our clients give us.”

For Malaysian company Uptop Access Sdn Bhd, the seminar was definitely a must, as Low Thian Sing, director of the company went on to explain: “It would create a safety awareness, thus instilling a safety culture, particularly into countries like Malaysia. We are still behind Singapore in this respect, but we are catching up.

“In Malaysia, we do undergo safety training, but only for general purposes such as site precautions. Not a machine specific training like what IPAF offers.

“This is new to us, and will take some time to implement. First, there must be a training centre to train operators before we can implement the regulation. For this, we have expressed our interest to IPAF in becoming their approved training centre in Malaysia, which (if approved) will be the first in the country.” ■

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