

Elevating safety standards, empowering industry

Every day across South Africa, machinery hums, structures ascend and loads are lifted and moved, almost like it's second nature. Yet, navigating the labyrinth of regulations and legalities around lifting equipment can feel like deciphering hieroglyphics. Within this landscape, industry association LEEASA plays a pivotal role, steadfast in its commitment to keeping safety at the forefront of operations. Lifting Africa finds out more.

Opening LEEASA's website reveals the clear focus for 2024. Front and centre is the organisation's newly launched Vetting Guide, a document to ensure that end-users of lifting equipment and their service providers are compliant with legislation and confidently so.

According to Ashley Davis, LEEASA Chairman, the guide serves as a cornerstone to foster a culture of safety and excellence within the lifting industry. "Most end-users of our equipment are unaware of regulations guiding LMEs and LMEs when choosing a reputable partner to service equipment. This guide is about making it easier

for equipment owners to know if their LMEs and LMEs are compliant with the law."

LEEASA director Kyle Graham emphasises that ensuring compliance in the industry is no longer a "nice-to-have" but a necessity. "Initially, the industry was structured for self-regulation, but it became evident that little to no regulation was being enforced. Recognising this gap, we understood the importance of ensuring that end-users and responsible parties were fully informed about their legal obligations when selecting a service provider for on-site work. Many companies were unaware of



their legal responsibilities concerning inspections, testing, and certification of their lifting equipment, while service providers were engaged in tasks beyond their competency. This posed significant risks to both compliance and safety for end-users,” he says.

Enhancing industry dynamics: creating value that counts

The vetting guide aims to clearly outline the requirements and necessary documentation for appointing a service provider to conduct on-site work, ensuring all activities adhere to legislative mandates and standards specified under the OHS Act. Its primary goal is to mitigate risks by engaging reputable service providers with the appropriate competencies, documentation, and equipment needed to execute tasks by regulatory standards.

The document has significantly benefited the industry by providing stakeholders with vital information, enabling them to vet documentation and select service providers with the requisite scopes and valid certifications. Moreover, it underscores the importance for all LMIs/LMEs to educate clients on compliance requirements and operational procedures to ensure adherence to legislative mandates and relevant standards.

According to Vice Chairperson Andries Agenbag, such documents developed by industry organisations play a critical role in fostering transparency, standardisation, and, ultimately, safety across the sector, serving as invaluable resources for stakeholders and regulatory bodies.

“Ensuring widespread distribution of the guide is paramount, aiming to reach as many end-users as possible across all the sectors that utilise lifting machines,” he says. “Additionally, we are developing complementary technical guides that we will send out throughout the year that will provide further detailed information tailored to specific categories, guiding end-users on compliance requirements and operational procedures related to lifting machinery.”

For LEEASA, these initiatives are crucial, mainly as LMIs may not consistently relay necessary information to end-users, often focusing solely on promoting load tests without comprehensive guidance on compliance obligations.

“One must not forget,” says Davis, “but the responsibility falls on the end user to ensure that equipment

undergoes inspection and load testing by a reputable LME employing an LMI. End users bear the onus and are held accountable for engaging service providers with the correct scopes of competency. They play a crucial role in regulating the industry by reporting discrepancies and ensuring that all stakeholders are on track.”

With this perspective in mind, LEEASA is advocating for increased collaboration, not only among its members but also with lifting users and government entities.

“Collaboration is essential; we must all work together to enhance compliance and safety standards within the lifting industry,” says Davis.

Navigating obstacles to success

The industry faces several challenges, including a need for modulation, insufficient transparency, and a lack of understanding regarding legal requirements among registered persons or LME business owners. These hurdles underscore the importance of comprehensive education and regulatory frameworks to address gaps in compliance and promote transparency within the sector.

“Some companies quote and carry out work outside their scope. There are also companies that “take shortcuts” when testing certain applications. It is essential to ensure that the entity carrying out the work has the correct equipment and scopes before appointing the service provider,” explains Graham.

Davis and Agenbag emphasise that the devil is indeed in the details: “Working together, we must tackle these challenges, ensuring clients are fully aware of their legal obligations and are educated about the requirements and testing procedures.”

Already, efforts are paying off. According to Council Member Surita Marx, requests for the Vetting Guide and other similar documents are increasing. “The Department of Labour has expressed interest in having LEEASA present at its national conference and has requested additional copies of the Vetting Guide for distribution. This recognition underscores the importance and relevance of LEEASA’s initiatives in promoting safety and compliance within the lifting industry.”

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