

WAREHOUSE SAFETY

Protecting Valuable Assets

The service engineer - always a vital interface between supplier and customer - deserves the protection only a Dendro vehicle lift can provide, writes *Peter MacLead*.

The UK Materials Handling Association recently highlighted the case of a reach truck that fell off a jack whilst undergoing service and trapped a technician's fingers. Mickey Petersson, Head of European Sales for industrial lift maker Dendro Lift, says such accidents can be prevented by investing in lifting equipment designed specifically for such a task.

"A good, safe, CE-marked lift would have prevented this from happening," he tells me. Petersson believes not enough emphasis is placed on the safety and wellbeing of forklift service technicians. "Forklift producers are developing fantastic technologies, but no-one is really thinking about how they can be safely serviced. Accidents such as that one in the UK are tragic but can absolutely be avoided."

He recalls meeting a technician with three fingers on one hand who had been involved in two separate accidents. "The first one, he had a pallet jack on a crane with two chains and it started to spin. He lost a finger. The second one, he raised a forklift on six Euro pallets, it fell over and he lost another finger. The thing is, he got a demo unit from us five years ago and they have only now just bought him one - and he's retiring next year!"

Dendro's USP

Whilst it is possible to buy lifts from a variety of sources, Petersson says Dendro has a USP: "Vehicle lifts are primarily made for the automotive sector, but only Dendro specialises in the material handling industry because our approach is to solve a problem for a customer, not just to satisfy a market demand."

Warehouse safety is evolving at a considerable pace, but Petersson feels the protection of technicians falls under the radar: "In most warehouses, anyone

needing to walk around the warehouse has to wear a special clip so a forklift driver can know exactly where they are. But if you try to search on Google for anything for the technician, you'll find a cone, a hard hat and a pair of work shoes. And yet these guys literally keep the wheels of the material handling world turning."

The age profile of a typical forklift technician is over 50, and they will almost always have some physical disorder - usually in the back or the knees - brought about by poor working conditions. An engineer responsible for keeping a forklift fleet running deserves more than to be kneeling on a hard concrete floor anxiously praying they don't get struck by a distracted forklift driver.

Petersson speaks so passionately on the subject that it's hard not to agree with him. "We see so often a forklift lifted by a crane with two chains and secured somehow or other, but what can the technician do if they don't have anything else?" I ask him what would be his message to a business that doesn't properly protect its service personnel. "I tell them a lift is an investment. Sure, they don't come cheap, but I can tell you for certain that a workplace accident will be a lot more expensive. Our lifts cost around under €100 a year to service and will last for at least 40 years.

"Linde says it can work 20% quicker and Jungheinrich says it can service three or four pallet jacks a day more with a Dendro lift. We did a study of technicians aged over 50 from three companies using our lifts and found they have between five and eight days less of sick leave resulting from knee and back injuries. That's a minimum of a whole work week. If you have 10 service guys, you've lost 50 days right there. Look at what a technician costs per day and multiply that by 50."



A Dendro lift can improve service rates by 20%



Dendro lifts are designed specifically for MHE



Without a lift, the engineer is vulnerable, uncomfortable and unproductive

Future Growth

I conclude by asking where future growth will come from. "Business has escalated since the pandemic, especially the food industry - we're developing a galvanised lift with an IP69 rating that would allow it to be powerwashed in a meat or chicken factory. We see that as a huge opportunity. Also, as the number of AGVs grows, there still has to be somebody to service and repair them. That's where we come in.

"Not everyone knows about us and I feel we haven't even started yet. We're getting new partners around Europe all the time, so we cannot complain. Life is good."

www.dendrolift.com