



Industry Ends Manufacture of Semi-Automatic Quick Hitches

Following numerous incidents including four fatalities involving the use of semi-automatic quick hitches, the HSE took the initiative to begin talks with quick-hitch manufacturers, excavator manufacturers and others to highlight the extent of the problem.

Quick hitches have become increasingly popular in recent years, systems on the market can be manual, automatic or semi-automatic.

While none of the systems are risk free and accidents have happened with all types, the semi automatic type has statistically been involved in the majority of accidents. The European manufacturers have voluntarily agreed to cease supply of semi-automatic quick hitches into the UK. The agreement comes into effect as of 1 October 2008.

The HSE had highlighted the problem with this equipment during 2007 and pushed the construction industry to ensure that employers and plant operators managed the risk presented by the semi automatic quick hitches.

Details on previous published information can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/quickhitch.htm>

http://www.hse.gov.uk/foi/internalops/sectors/construction/2_07_01.pdf

The agreement will mean that in the future only manual or automatic quick hitches will be available for purchase. It does not mean that all semi automatic hitches are illegal as of 1 October 2008; when used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions semi automatic quick hitches can still be used safely.

Owners and users should still be able to order spare parts for current semi automatic hitches from suppliers.

Those in control of work involving quick hitches are to ensure that adequate precautions are taken following a comprehensive risk assessment and should include:

- Excavator operators training on the use of quick hitches in general and should be competent to use the specific hitch on their machine
- Operators should only use the manufacturer-specified retaining pin and these should be readily available
- A system for checking that the pin is in place on the hitch before starting work and after every fitting of an attachment should be in place
- Operators should not use the machine unless they are satisfied the quick hitch is secure. If the operator cannot see from the cab, then they must visually check from the ground.

For more information on this subject, or any other health and safety issue, please call us on 01327 811822.