

People still critical

Ute Filippone, ID Systems' business manager EMEA & UK takes a look at the issue of robots versus humans in the MHE sector.

“Will a robot take your job?” was a headline that caught my eye on the BBC news website recently. Referring to a study by researchers at Oxford University and Deloitte, it stated that about 35% of current jobs in the UK are at high risk of computerisation over the following 20 years. Intrigued, I checked out the automation risk of my role on the interactive site and was relieved to find that at 39%, this was “not very likely”.

The statistics concerning forklift truck drivers tell a slightly different story, with the likelihood of automation rated at 48%. While it is true that more and more companies are looking to materials handling automation to improve processes, streamline shipping operations and lower supply chain operating costs, the requirement for living, breathing forklift truck operators will remain. At present it is estimated that there are at least 93,000 working in the UK.

But to err is human, and fleet managers can capitalise on advances in technology - MHE fleet management systems, for example, to improve safety by making operators more accountable, monitoring impacts and reducing the

likelihood of careless driving. The temptation to cut corners is, regrettably, also a human trait - take pre-operational checks of the forklift, for example. Enforcing and monitoring the process by electronic pre-ops checklists is a much more fool proof method than the old manual paper trail methodology, and leads to fewer accidents and lower MHE repair costs.

ID Systems is the pioneer of the electronic pre-ops checklist, with key features being hierarchical and impact-driven checklists. Questions can be tailored 100% to the customers' operational requirements and the type of equipment being used. As well as



confirming that the forklift is safe to drive, by an authorised operator, questions such as “Are you wearing appropriate PPE?” or “Are you under the influence of any medication?” can be included to reinforce the message that operating a potentially dangerous piece of equipment is not to be taken lightly.

The randomising of questions further ensures that an operator must actively review the response options prior to confirming the answer. This innovative feature eliminates the risk of operators simply “ticking the box” robot style without reviewing the options first. Wrong/critical responses by operators can automatically enforce a log-out procedure: they will not be able to use the truck in question and a wireless message will be sent to the head of the workshop informing of its current log-out status.

Intermediate answers on the state of trucks included in ID Systems' PowerBox and PowerFleet products again offer more options than a simple yes/no reply: the possibility to enter a minor warning alert - without prompting the log-out process - can be recorded to enable prompt post-shift preventative maintenance to be carried out, reducing major future repair or truck breakdown events.

So as long as the need for man/woman power remains, the ability to monitor and promote safer behaviour with technology will likewise remain a valuable asset. And if robots did take over, surely we would all miss the human interaction in the workplace? Or would we? I suppose robots don't have moods...

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New forklift tyre service promises one stop shop

Toyota Material Handling UK has launched a new forklift tyre service.

The forklift manufacturer promises a one stop shop approach for all forklift tyre replacement whether it's for a one truck user or a major fleet operator.

The Toyota forklift tyre service provides a range of quality forklift tyres to suit different applications at competitive prices, a reliable national mobile tyre fitting service and a dedicated support team who manage the process from enquiry to invoicing.

Phill Bird, after-sales director at Toyota Material Handling UK says: “Many customers are now looking to

deal with one supplier for their after-sales requirements. Our partnership provider for industrial tyres enables us to offer our customers' expert advice and the reliable service they need direct from Toyota.”

In addition to the standard tyre replacement, customers can also opt for account management with scheduled fleet checks to allow them to budget more effectively and conform to health and safety guidelines.

Bird adds: “The dedicated support team respond to enquiries direct from customers and also our service

technicians, so the service is easily accessible for all of our customers.”

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At Toyota we believe that three elements contribute to reliable service; People, product and process.

