

The height of high-tech

Electronic technology isn't generally associated with the building industry; when it comes to construction, nothing compares with clever planning, heavy machinery and plenty of hard work.

To a casual observer, it's incredible how much computer circuitry can be packed into something as apparently simple as a construction hoist – leading to significant savings in time and costs. While the majority of us may see a lift going up and down all day – dutifully transporting staff, tools and materials to higher levels – few stop to consider the science behind hoist installation and next-generation lifting equipment.

Direct Hoist, the midlands-based hoist sales and hire specialist, is at the forefront of construction hoist technology. Generally specialising in up-to-date and fastidiously-maintained German GEDA machinery, Direct Hoist has introduced a convenient GEDA BatteryLadderLIFT, which dispenses with clumsy cables thanks to cordless technology. Using an electric motor within the platform, powered by a 24V 10Ah lithium-ion battery, the BatteryLadderLIFT can carry as much as 120kg up to heights of 10m.

Operation is managed wirelessly by remote control or a smartphone app, and recharging takes two hours. With no tools needed to erect the BatteryLadderLIFT, it boasts an ultra-short assembly time. Transportation runs at a speed of 15m per minute and, when the BatteryLadderLIFT is not needed, its ladder sections can be used

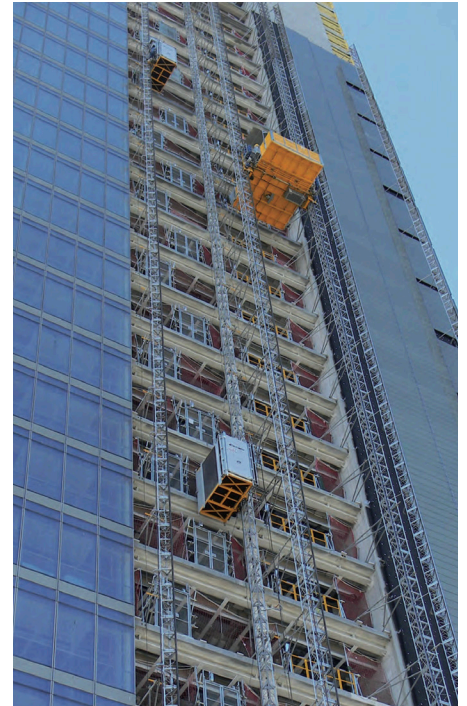
as normal step-ladders or lean-to ladders – again increasing versatility.

Meanwhile, Direct Hoist has become the UK distributor of Electroelsa, an Italian manufacturer of mast-climbing work platforms (MCWPs), transport platforms, material hoists and construction hoists.

Direct Hoist's managing director Rob Wilson uses his 30-plus years' experience of the sector to spot trends and bring the best

machines to market. He says, "Electroelsa is implementing a wide range of technological innovations, which we're excited to introduce to the British construction industry."

"We're currently adapting the entire Electroelsa range for the rigours of the rental market, where we're enhancing components for longevity during intense usage – it's vital to minimise downtime on-site, while maintaining efficiency, cost and ease of use."



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HOIST

Electroelsa Hoists

SIM technology

Remote diagnostics

Mobile reporting

Less downtime



Left: Direct Hoist's 10m training tower gives students access to an NVQ Level 2 in hoist installation; right: safety instruction is vital for working at heights.



Electroelsa is a market-leader in safety, boasting an independent overspeed device (OSD) that intervenes by locking the platform if it descends at an excessive speed, along with an automatic safety system to protect the machine from being overloaded.

Electroelsa machines also benefit from high-tech computer control, including SIM data-logging, featuring a self-diagnostic function to remotely relate to Direct Hoist any problems, wherever it is in the world.

"We can save countless man-hours by solving issues without even visiting the site," says Rob. "We can programme a hoist to restrict or enable users, and we can turn it off remotely in the event of emergency or theft – or even non-payment..."

Of course, a computer is only as good as its

operator, and Rob is quick to emphasise the importance of human input long before any equipment is erected.

He says, "We offer free advice, site surveys and project planning to establish what's essential at day one, and what may be wanted in three or six months' time. We know what, where, when and how big, and we advise accordingly. Our know-how ensures we get it right every time."

All the complicated calculations are carried out by Rob's conscientious team, but it's much more than simply working out where a hoist will stand. Static load measurements assess what equipment or personnel a hoist will be required to carry. Ground pressure figures account for voids below the surface. Dynamic load calculations establish the

forces of a platform when moving, starting and stopping on the hoist. Even the existing building has to be checked for its ability to withstand the tie loadings.

Direct Hoist is keen to communicate this knowledge and expertise with hoist operators, which explains why the company has established an accredited training facility at its Lincolnshire headquarters.

Here, candidates will be trained to reach NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) Level 2 standard in hoist installation. A two-day session will be offered for experienced people, while a week-long course is available for a more comprehensive understanding of erecting and dismantling different types of construction hoist.

As well as a new classroom, Direct Hoist's facility includes a 10m training tower, capable of transporting a two-tonne platform hoist to full height. Candidates are taught the theory and practical aspects of assembly and disassembly of various lifts, including GEDA 300, 500 and 2000 units.

Direct Hoist's fully-qualified trainers place keen emphasis on safety, to ensure installers understand the essentials of keeping themselves and others away from risk. Only then will they be deemed competent.

The firm has partnered with a specialist training provider for NVQ accreditation. So, at the end of each course, students are examined by an external assessor before they can receive a certificate, which will be recognised on most building sites.

Rob continues, "We're expecting to run two courses per month, starting in February. And then we have more programmes on the horizon, including electrical safety and working at heights.

"We're also launching a plant hire division, again to give our clients better and easier access to the machinery they need."

By then, Direct Hoist will be ready to open a new depot in Birmingham – another step on this impressive firm's flight to the top.

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