

Electric tugs from **MasterMover** have helped improve handling efficiencies at Glasgow Royal Infirmary by 20%.

Prime mover

By investing in electric-operated materials handling tugs for moving roll cages and other bulk supplies around the hospital, Glasgow Royal Infirmary has boosted portering efficiencies and productivity by at least 20%.

"By purchasing the electric tugs from MasterMover, the hospital has reduced the risk of injury to its portering staff, whilst improving porter handling efficiencies and productivity by at least 20%," says Andrew Russell, portering and security manager at Glasgow Royal Infirmary.

"Furthermore, deliveries of supplies to the hospital can now be unloaded in a third of the time. The tugs have also made the job easier and safer."

Glasgow Royal Infirmary, in the east of the city, provides a wide range of district general hospital, regional, supra-regional and national acute clinical services. Since 2001, two major capital developments have been opened at the hospital – The

Princess Royal Maternity and the Jubilee Building – which provide accommodation for a new Accident & Emergency department, a coronary care unit, an acute medical receiving unit and an orthopaedic surgery inpatient unit. The hospital has 135 portering staff.

The hospital itself is an ageing building with uneven slopes, lots of sharp corners and turns, as well as rough ground outside, which makes handling and movement of hospital bulk supplies very challenging. As Andrew Russell explains, "Prior to investing in the SmartMover tug, roll cages of supplies such as food, toiletries and laundry were unloaded from delivery vans and moved around the hospital manually, one at a time. Using the SmartMover, a single porter can now manoeuvre up to three roll cages at a time. Cages can be transferred direct from the back of a delivery vehicle to the required destination within the hospital, quickly and safely, without requiring any additional equipment or tools."

In addition, porters were also responsible for moving bulk supplies such as pharmacy boxes, sundries for wards and refuse bins with clinical and domestic waste. These heavy, bulky goods were moved around the hospital using a combination of manual effort and ride-on tugs.

However, these ride-on tugs were too large and bulky to negotiate tight bends, narrow corridors and elevators because their turning point was too wide. This was causing unacceptable delays in deliveries.

As Andrew Russell puts it, "Often, if a corridor narrows in the hospital, the porter would have to leave the ride-on tug behind

and manoeuvre the bulk supplies manually to their required destination."

It was back in early 2010 that Andrew Russell realised that a solution was required in order to improve handling efficiencies and to reduce the risk of injuries to staff and patients. A work colleague recommended that he contact a local materials handling specialist called The Reekie Group.

With branches in Perth, Coldstream, Fife and Stirling, The Reekie Group has more than 60 years of experience in solving customer's materials handling problems. The Group is also the preferred distributor of MasterMover products in Scotland. The company has a fleet of 25 vehicles and so is ideally placed to service and support MasterMover equipment in Scotland.

Sandy Thomson, field sales manager at The Reekie Group, comments, "Andrew Russell contacted me and explained the problems he was having with movement of roll cages. We therefore visited the hospital to demonstrate the benefits of MasterMover's SmartMover SM100, which is specifically designed to move multiple roll cages."

According to Andrew Russell, this demonstration took place in the sub-basement of the hospital and was a resounding success. "We decided to test the SmartMover on some uneven flooring and so the basement was the ideal testing ground. We coupled the tug to three roll cages and it worked very well. Immediately, we began to see the benefits the tug would bring to the hospital."

SmartMover is a versatile machine designed for moving roll cages from vehicle tail lifts and across uneven surfaces, slopes and can turn through 90°. By clamping to the base of the roll cage, the unit ensures that the cage cannot be tipped onto the operator. This reduces serious injury to employees and makes unloading a single-person procedure. Efficiency and safety are further improved by allowing





the movement of multiple roll cages using the towing links. Sealed batteries, variable speed and auto braking are also standard.

SmartMover connects to the base of the wheeled load via a clamping mechanism, which is operated by using a simple lever located on the neck of the device. Once connected, the machine is secured to the load and the operator can use the 'forward' and 'reverse' controls.

The machine is also very easy-to-use. A simple throttle paddle on the headset enables the user to constantly

vary the speed according to the conditions. There is also a twin speed button that enables the operator to place a cap on the speed, which is useful for busy healthcare environments.

Amongst other built-in safety features is an anti-crush button that ensures that the user cannot become trapped between the machine and an immovable object. The device has an electro-magnetic brake, which is constantly engaged until the operator applies power via the throttle. The unit can be steered on either side, enabling easy turning in tight spaces. When off load, the device travels on the support wheels for maximum operator comfort.

Following the demonstration, Andrew Russell ordered two SmartMovers from The Reekie Group for moving multiple roll cages. The Reekie Group ensured that appropriate couplings were supplied to connect multiple roll cages to the SmartMover machines. In addition, Andrew Russell purchased two Master Tug MT3 machines to replace the ride-on tugs for moving more bulky supplies.

MasterMover says the MasterTug MT3-240 can push, pull and steer wheeled and semi-wheeled loads up

to 2,400kg in weight. The machine's patented technology moves the weight of the load on to the drive wheel through a coupling system, thereby ensuring maximum traction from a very light and manoeuvrable machine. Very simple to operate and with a range of integrated safety features, the machine is compact and lightweight, making it ideal for use in environments where space is restricted.

At Glasgow Royal Infirmary, 12 porters received full on-site training from MasterMover on how to use the four tugs. According to Andrew Russell, this training was "fast, straightforward and provided a real morale-boost for the porters".

As Andrew Russell concludes, "In just three months of using the MasterMover tugs, we are already seeing the benefits. Productivity, handling efficiencies and safety have all improved significantly and the porters are happier because the tugs have made their life much easier. Dealing with The Reekie Group has also been a real pleasure, as their support and customer service has been first class at all times." ●

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