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Dubai cranes demand slumps as construction slows

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The number of cranes in Dubai has slumped by around 50 percent from peak construction levels and current orders have ground to a halt, a leading crane manufacturer has told Arabian Business.

"For the last couple of months it is zero, totally dead," David Semple, managing director of Manitowoc Cranes, said of the number of orders the company has received from Dubai.

December 2008 was the turning point, he added, and since then business has been predominantly outside the UAE, with Saudi Arabia forecast to be the biggest market in 2010.

However, Semple said his company plans to keep its headquarters in Dubai for the foreseeable future.

For many years it was commonly reported that a quarter of the world's cranes were in Dubai. While this urban myth has already been debunked by many experts, Semple said this was certainly not the case now.

There are no official figures as to the number of cranes in the emirate but a few years ago Semple drove around Dubai and counted the number of tower cranes he could see in use on construction sites.

He said that there were close to 2,000 at the time and he now estimates that the number is more than half that and less than a 1,000 today.

The peak time for crane manufacturing in the UAE was the middle of 2007, said Semple.

During these boom times the manufacturer was supplying between 10-20 cranes a month, mainly in Dubai.

However, the downturn in the real estate sector saw sales prices dropping by nearly a half and projects being cancelled and put on hold.

In July 2008, the Dubai-based research house Proleads Group reported that more than 400 projects with a total value of over \$300bn had been placed on hold or cancelled in the UAE.

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