

July - August 2010

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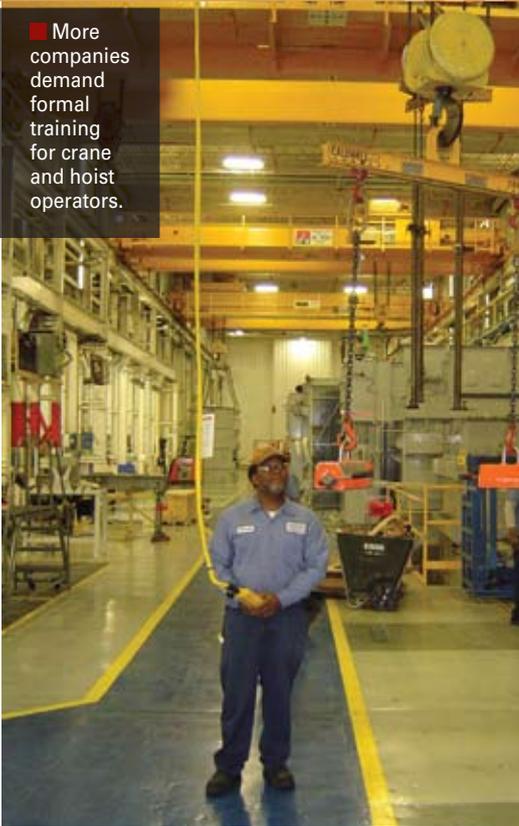
THE STATUS OF CRANE TRAINING

Experts discuss common questions at ICHC

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■ More companies demand formal training for crane and hoist operators.



The Current Status of Overhead Crane Operator Training

■ Industry professionals discuss common questions associated with training and certification

AT THE INDUSTRIAL Crane & Hoist Conference, held in May in Houston, Texas, a group of industry experts gathered to answer questions about overhead crane operator training. From certification program developers to trainers to end users with experience in building a safety program, these professionals answered *Industrial Lift and Hoist's* questions about the current status of training, as well as attendees' questions about implementing programs in their facilities. The following Q&A highlights some of the conversation that took place at the event.



Joe Crews recently established Crews Crane Training International, a crane and hoist sales, service, and maintenance provider for the material-handling industry. His clients have included General Electric, Caterpillar, Cooper Tool, Siemens, Volvo, Flow Serve, Columbus McKinnon Corp., and the Navy Crane Center. Crews has more than 20 years experience traveling extensively to sites all over the world, providing services for companies using material-handling equipment. His titles include certified overhead crane and hoist operator, certified inspector and instructor, OSHA Outreach trainer, and he is classified as a master rigger. He is a member of the Association of Crane and Rigging Professionals, National Safety and Health Council, and American Society of Mechanical Engineers.



Joel Oliva has been program manager and regulatory affairs coordinator for the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators since 2007 and has worked within the organization since 2001. His focus is on legislative and regulatory issues, dealing with all aspects of crane industry personnel, as well as program development and implementation. One of the programs offered by NCCCO is overhead crane operator certification.



Mike Perkins has more than 18 years experience in manufacturing and facilities maintenance management. He is the maintenance/facilities manager for National Oilwell Varco, Houston, Texas, which provides major mechanical components for land and offshore drilling rigs, complete land drilling and well servicing rigs, tubular inspection and internal tubular coatings, drill string equipment, extensive lifting and handling equipment, and a broad offering of down-hole drilling motors, bits and tools. Perkins is the maintenance and facilities manager at the Air Center manufacturing facility, as well as the project manager for facility consolidation at the Downhole Tool Division. His background includes automotive, aerospace, and oilfield manufacturing.



Tom Reardon is the training manager for Columbus McKinnon, Amherst, N.Y. During his 20 years in the material-handling industry, Reardon has provided training and technical support, assisted with installations, modifications, and performed field service. He has conducted hundreds of operator, safety, maintenance, and inspection training seminars in North and South America.

Question: *Where is the industry at with overhead crane operator training?*

Oliva: Operator certification has become much more a part of the conversation over the last 10 or 15 years. We've been doing it since 1996, and we developed an overhead crane specific program in 2005 due mainly to an industry demand for it...As the industry has evolved, there has been more of a need for accountability, and more of a need of documentation for proof. Personnel qualification is part of that process. We've seen a very positive response from those that use a certification-type program.

Perkins: From an HSE (health, safety, and environment) aspect, anyone that touches our overhead cranes is certified. That is a requirement that we have internally in our HSE department. We don't want anyone on the equipment that doesn't know how to lift. We have had quite a reduction in lost-time accidents since we've implemented this program.

We've had certified trainers come in and certify us internally—the program is train the trainer. Safety orientation for new employees, as well as periodically for operators, involves pulling them aside to give them some internal training to hone their skills...We do it to stay within our ISO certifications, [showing] that we are continuing a training program for our employees internally.



■ One of the benefits of operator training is reducing lost-time accidents.

Crews: Talking about end users, there is a large demand for companies that are concerned about the proper operation of cranes and hoists. We're seeing more of a demand in formal training vs. someone just being assigned to operate a crane without any kind of training, so there are a lot more safety departments that are now getting on-board, and on the end user side, we see a demand.

Question: *Currently demand for certification is coming from within the industry, from individual companies. Is there a national standard being developed that defines certification training or qualifications?*

Perkins: Like the OSHA standards, if you don't provide training for your employees, you may be held liable, but I haven't seen any specific standard written. We're just doing it internally to continue on with our certifications as HSE.

Crews: We're basically referencing ASME and CMAA to provide a type of training program that we see is hitting the top subjects that an operator needs to know prior to operating and during operation and during an inspection...We are providing the training that we know is needed for each type of operator, based on what kind of crane they are operating. There's been no interest on the federal level as there has been on the construction side.

Question: *Is there is a message that would convince management to spend money on training, even though there is no standard forcing them to do it? If so, what would that be?*

Perkins: [Our upper management's] buy-in was training people and the reduction [of accidents]. It started out as HSE, but we needed to train our people to reduce accidents. That was the first buy-in. The second was if we have internal training within our company for the ISO and certifications, we could have continuous training within. If you take a lost-time accident because of crane operation, that's their buy-in right there.

Crews: I would say the No. 1 thing to take back to management is accountability. When you have multiple operators operating pieces of equipment—it doesn't have to be just hoists

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and cranes but any piece of equipment—you have to find accountability with each employee. The way you can do that is to let them know first and foremost what the current standards are that are required of [the operator and company] to operate a hoist and crane... Individual accountability is important when an inspection isn't done on a daily basis or it is done incorrectly.

Perkins: [Regarding accountability and liability] As long as you have a signed document that this person was trained on that piece of equipment, and you have proper certifications that it was load tested and what not, I think...the company is showing they have done their due diligence.

Question: *At what point should a trainee be allowed to operate a crane?*

Crews: In the training classes, you need to demonstrate that you are competent, that you understand what we're talking about in the classroom environment and through testing. Testing is crucial; if you just put on a program and they walk out with whatever materials you gave them, you don't know if they interpreted what you are saying...We want to make sure that they understand what's been taught.

Reardon: One of the things I see from operator training is you have to separate it into two parts: You have a knowledge section, and you have a skill section. There are many training companies out there that do the knowledge lesson quite adequately.

When it comes to the skills portion, many of our customers want hands-on, so we provide that. But often that's just an exercise in motor skills, especially for floor-operated cranes. You've just demonstrated you can push a button. A real training program, in my opinion, needs to [come] from the knowledge section, which enlightens the operator to a lot of things about cranes and hoists.

When it comes to the skills portion, I don't think there is a training company out there that could meet the requirements of [every crane owner]. That gets very specific and very particular. The crane owners need to help in defining after the skills session what they want their operators to walk away with... If you can define what you want in your certification, then you can find the trainer to meet your needs.

Question: *Should we talk about rigging in the same breath as operator training?*

Oliva: We think so; even on our operator tests, we test a basic level of rigging. We have a separate exam for rigger certification, but the fact is they need to know some rigging for the operator certification test, but it is just a piece of the full puzzle.

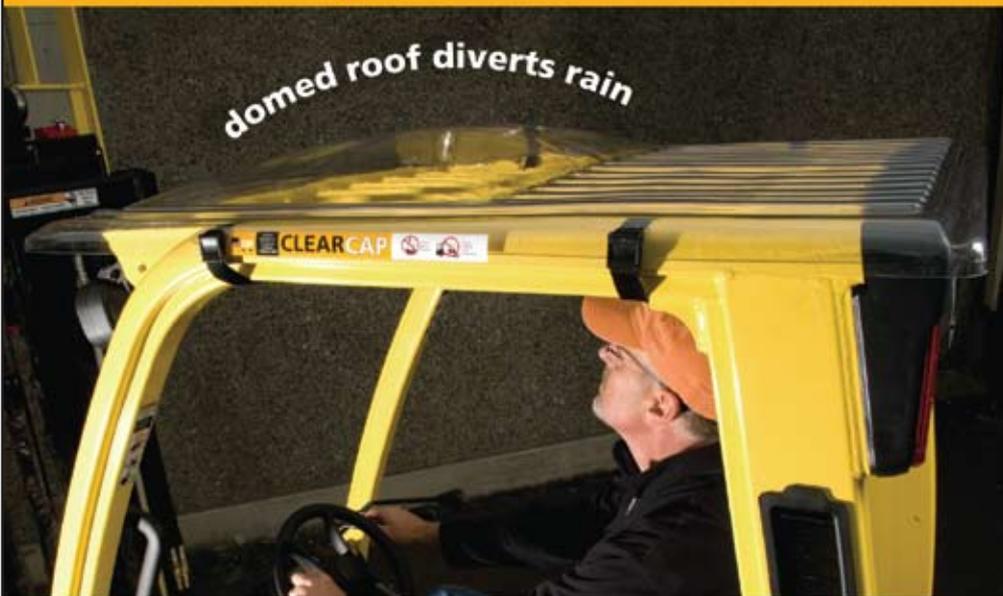
Crews: Absolutely. Rigging is where we find operators getting into trouble by placing something in the hook—be it a below-the-hook device or a sling—that they're not calculating what the device is rated at, what it can pick up, and what angle and where their center of gravity is located.

Question: *Are all trainers equipped to give training? And how do you find good training?*

Reardon: Word of mouth is a good way. Check references. I think to be an effective trainer, it takes years involved in whatever you are training.

The difference between a lecturer and a trainer is practical knowledge of it rather than reading a fact sheet and repeating the information, and real world experiences... There is no such thing as a certified crane trainer by national standards.

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