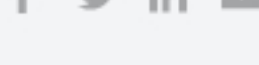


OSHA's Final Crane Rule: What You Need to Know

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More than eight years after it was first proposed, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) new certification and training rule for construction crane and derrick operators will go into effect Dec. 10.

The new rule changes the certification categories for crane operations and removes the requirement that operators be certified for a specific crane lifting capacity. Furthermore, OSHA stated that it is “making permanent the employer duty to ensure that operators are competent to operate the equipment safely. While certification ensures an objective baseline of general knowledge of crane operation, it does not ensure that operators know how to operate a particular crane for a specific task.”

So what does this mean for employers? They’ll now need to make sure their crane operators have the required knowledge and skills needed to safely operate the equipment. In other words, offering additional training in addition to what’s already required for certification.

The evaluation and training provision goes into effect February 7, 2019. To learn more about the final rule you can visit the [Federal Register](#).

Graham Brent, CEO of the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO), has watched OSHA's rule making closely for more than two decades. The U.S. crane industry had repeatedly lobbied for a basic certification requirement to demonstrate operator competence. In 2003, OSHA reportedly announced that it would create the rule. More than six years later, OSHA's new proposals were published.

“This was the first time ever that there was a cogent effort towards nationwide certification,” Brent told *Cranes Today*.

What's the Cost?

OSHA writes in the Federal Register that affected employers hire approximately 117,130 crane operators. It further estimates that the cost will be more than \$1.481 million for the competency evaluations and another \$94,000 for additional training. OSHA estimates the total annual cost of annual compliance at \$1.6 million. It estimates, however, a one-time savings of \$25.6 million due to the dropped requirement for operator certification for cranes of varying capacities.

Newest Changes

OSHA rewrote a few parts of the proposed final rule before publishing the final [rule](#). Here are some of the changes:

Proposed rule: an operator-in-training is barred from performing a “critical lift.”

Final rule: The critical lift is permitted if the operator is certified and under the direction of a trainer.

Proposed rule: State and local licenses have to include the type or the type and capacity on which an operator is certified.

Final rule: Omits this requirement.

Proposed final rule on evaluations: “Through an evaluation, the employer must ensure that each operator demonstrates ... skills, knowledge, and judgment necessary to operate the equipment safely ...”

Expanded final rule on evaluations: “Through an evaluation, the employer must ensure that each operator is qualified by a demonstration of skills and knowledge, as well as the ability to recognize and avert risk, necessary to operate the equipment safely ...”

Proposed rule: Employers must evaluate all operators once the new rule takes effect.

Final rule: For operators employed prior to the effective date of the new rule, the employer may rely on its previous assessments of the operator in lieu of conducting a new evaluation of that operator's existing knowledge and skills.

Proposed rule: Evaluations required for operators of derricks, sideboom cranes, and equipment with lifting capacity of less than 2 tons.

Final rule: Operators of this equipment excepted from the requirement for evaluations.

Proposed: No delay of effective date.

Final rule: 60-day delay for the requirement to evaluate operators.

Evaluating Crane Operators Under New Rule

The training requirement of OSHA's final rule for construction crane and derrick operators allows employers to assess the level of training needed. Existing training and evaluations may be adequate, according to the guidelines.

The NCCCO offers a [guideline](#) to commonly asked questions. Here is snapshot of some of the questions:

What am I required to do under OSHA's new Evaluation requirement?

The Rule states that, effective February 7, 2019, you must conduct an evaluation of each operator to ensure he/she is qualified by a demonstration of (i) the skills and knowledge necessary to operate the equipment safely, and (ii) the ability to recognize and avert risks associated with the operation.

What does OSHA mean by “skills and knowledge”?

The skills and knowledge OSHA has identified include those specific to the safety devices, operational aids, and software the crane is equipped with. Most importantly, the evaluation must take into account the size and configuration of the crane he/she plans to operate including (but not limited to) the crane's lifting capacity, boom length, any attachments (such as a luffing jib), and counterweight set-up.

What else must the Evaluation consist of?

The evaluation must also cover the operator's ability to perform the hoisting activities required for the work he/she is assigned, including, if applicable, blind lifts, personnel hoisting, and multi-crane lifts.

Can I just not go by OSHA's standard definition of a “qualified person?”

No. The rule is very clear on this. OSHA states that the definition of “qualified” in §1926.32 does not apply here. In other words, possession of a certificate or degree cannot, by itself, qualify an operator to operate cranes.

Who can conduct the Evaluations?

They must be conducted by someone who has the “knowledge, training, and experience necessary” to assess equipment operators.

Additionally, the NCCCO website provides guidance for [training](#), [certification](#), and [evaluation](#) on the final rule. In addition to NCCCO, several other organizations provide crane operator certification.

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