



Questions & Answers

CRANE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

How is the new Regulation affecting crane operators?

The new Regulation states that as of July 1, 2007, most operators of cranes covered by the Regulation must have documented proof that they are either certified or registered for assessment which will lead to certification by the BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS).

Why was the previous Regulation changed?

The previous Regulation referred to the Industry Training Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) which was suspended making the Regulation un-enforceable. Also, the previous Regulation was limited in the types of cranes and industry application to which it applied.

Why should crane operators be certified?

A competency-driven, crane operator certification will lead to a higher level of safety for all workers on a construction site and the general public. For employers, this adds up to savings in both compensation expenditures and in related indirect costs such as lost productivity, damaged equipment and recruiting replacement staff.

As well, a recognized, industry-led system will begin to address the serious shortage of operators. It will help attract experienced workers from other parts of North America, as well as offering young British Columbians a new and more accessible means of becoming a crane operator.

Who will certify new or incumbent crane operators?

The BC Association for Crane Safety is, at present, the only organization that is developing a program that meets the WorkSafeBC requirement.

What is the BC Association for Crane Safety?

The BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS) was formed in November 2005 to promote the development of an industry-driven crane operator certification system in BC. The BCACS includes representatives of employers and workers from many of the industries that use cranes, as well as representatives of WorkSafeBC and other government agencies. The Association's constitution defines its purpose as:

- To promote accident-free crane operations throughout British Columbia.
- To promote the establishment in British Columbia of a cost effective crane operator qualification regime that:
 - i. involves documented proof of competency
 - ii. includes theoretical and practical examinations, and
 - iii. is accessible and available at all levels of the industry
- To promote the attractiveness of the industry to prospective entry-level crane operators and the timely achievement of their qualifications.
- To serve as an industry advisory body to agencies in a position to oversee qualification and training.

- To serve as an advisory body to the WorkSafeBC regarding regulatory matters and other matters related to occupational health and safety as they impact the crane industry.

How many cranes and operators are there in BC?

There are approximately 5,000 tower, boom and mobile cranes working in BC. The 250 tower cranes are primarily used in the lower mainland for construction. Mobile cranes are the largest piece of equipment some having the capacity to lift in excess of 500 tons.

There are approximately 5,000 crane operators with a variety of skills and abilities. Many operators are approaching retirement with up to 300 new operators required each year.

What are the most common crane incidents?

Common types of incidents are cranes contacting high voltage power lines, cranes tipping over, booms bending due to overloading, material falling due to improperly secured loads or rigging, structural failure of the crane itself and poor communication between the operator and site personnel causing an incident to occur.

What does the operator need?

The operator must be registered with the BCACS which means he is waiting for assessment or have a Level 1, 2 or 3 certificate. The registration document puts the operator in the queue for assessment to obtain a Level 2 or 3 certification as soon as possible. Level 1 is a permit that allows a trainee operator to work under the direct supervision of a qualified operator. As the worker gains skills he may ask for assessment and be granted a higher level of certification.

Who asked for the regulation to be changed?

In 2004 and 2005 public hearings were held across British Columbia. A very large majority of the presentations given by persons and groups was that crane operators needed to be certified. Many city councils and the BC Safety Authority, concerned about public safety around cranes, were considering creating bylaws or regulations for crane operators. However, industry, city councils and the BC Safety Authority felt that the crane operator certification would be best handled through WorkSafeBC regulations.

What does certification of a crane operator mean under the new Regulation?

A certificate issued by the BC Association for Crane Safety is proof of competency. The holder of the certificate will have been assessed by an independent third party and will have demonstrated that he or she has the knowledge, skills and ability to safely operate a crane. The certificate will specify what types of cranes are covered by the certificate or will specify what restrictions that apply to the operator. The certificate will mean that the operator meets a basic standard for safe operation. Employers will still be obliged to ensure the operator has the knowledge, skills and abilities beyond the basic standards that have been assessed and documented.

What cranes are required to have certified operators?

The new regulation applies to operators of boom trucks, mobile cranes, tower cranes and self erecting tower cranes. An exemption applies to cranes either under five tons or with a boom length less than 25 feet. Bridge cranes are not included in this regulation.

How will existing operators be accommodated?

Existing operators will be allowed to continue to operate cranes once they have registered with the BCACS. Within one year of registration, they will be required to take a practical assessment.

When will WorkSafeBC Prevention Officers start enforcing this new regulation?

After July 1, 2007 Officers will issue orders to employers and/or operators if the operator does not possess a registration document issued by the BCACS. Documentation proving the operator is registered for assessment will meet the compliance test until Dec. 31, 2007.

Will the BCACS offer training courses?

No, the Association does not offer courses to operators. An operator may challenge the theory or practical assessment without taking any courses. Current operators should do a self-assessment or contact a trainer for assessment prior to paying for testing. There are many public or private trainers who offer this service. The operator or employer must carefully select a trainer, if required, that will meet the needs of the operator.

How does a trainer provide services to existing or new operators?

A person or company can offer direct training on a fee for service basis or can contact the Industry Training Authority (ITA) to become a trainer that accesses funding from them to provide courses. Both are acceptable business models.

What if an operator fails the theory or practical assessment?

The operator will be given a report of their results as well as an action plan by which to increase the skill level. This process is designed not to put anyone out of work but to bring everyone up to a common minimum standard. This may result in an operator not being able to perform certain types of lifts without proper supervision until a re-assessment has been successfully completed. The assessment will be retaken once the applicant has addressed the defined issues and is confident that they are now ready for re-assessment. This is applicable for both the theory and practical assessments.

Why is it important to register with the BC Association for Crane Safety before July 1, 2007?

All operators who register before July 1, 2007 will be considered to be an incumbent operator. Certain incumbent operators will not be required to do the theory assessment by a written test but will have their theory knowledge assessed during the practical test.

How much will it cost for assessment?

There will be fees for the various assessments. These are still in development and will be posted as soon as possible and are likely to be parallel to Alberta's.

Are there a minimum number of hours required before an operator can challenge the theory or practical assessments?

There will be no hour requirements for either boom truck or mobile crane operators. Certification is competency based. This information is available through www.worksafebc.com or www.bcacs.ca

How will an operator know when to challenge the theory and practical assessments?

Clearly defined definitions and criteria along with an overview of the content of the assessment will be supplied in an information package forwarded to each person who registers and will vary depending on the type of crane the worker wants to become certified to operate. Competency profiles for boom truck, mobile cranes and tower cranes are available on www.worksafebc.com.

Does a crane operator holding NCCCO certification from the United States need to be re-certified in BC?

Yes

Does a worker who operates a crane occasionally as part of a regular job need to be certified?

Yes. Once the operator is registered, the applicable information package situation will be supplied.

How can I can get more information on the Regulation or Guidelines and/or register with the BC Association for Crane Safety?

For information on the Regulation or Guidelines go to the direct link:

<http://www2.worksafebc.com/Portals/Construction/CoursesAndEvents.asp?ReportID=33541>.

Or E-mail cranopce@worksafebc.com.