

Questions & Answers: Crane Operator Certification

Overview

As of July 1, 2007, current crane operators must possess either proof of certification (as described in question 5 below), or a BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS) document confirming assessment registration.

1. What is the BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS)?

The BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS) was formed in 2005 to promote the development of an industry-driven crane operator certification system in the province. The BCACS includes employer and worker representatives from many 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:
 - involves documented proof of competency
 - includes theoretical and practical examinations, and
 - 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 WorkSafeBC regarding regulatory matters and other issues related to occupational health and safety as they impact the crane industry

2. Who asked for the Regulation to be changed?

In province-wide public hearings throughout 2004 and 2005, employers, city councils, and others recommended that crane operator certification be managed by WorkSafeBC regulations.

3. Why should crane operators be certified?

Certifying crane operators will:

- Increase safety for all workers and the general public
- Reduce the frequency and severity of injuries for workers
- Reduce indirect costs including lost productivity, damaged equipment, and recruitment of auxiliary staff as a result of a crane incident

A recognized, industry-supported certification system will:

- Create a more accessible and standardized process to become a crane operator
- Attract experienced workers from other parts of North America, and
- Attract new individuals to the crane industry as a career choice

4. Who will certify new or incumbent crane operators?

Currently Both the Fulford Harbour Group (FHG) cranesafe certificates and the Industry Training Authority (ITA) crane operator Certificates of Qualification are acceptable to WorkSafeBC.

The FHG certifies existing incumbent operators for mobile cranes, self-erecting cranes, and boom truck operators.

Based in BC, the Fulford Harbour Group is a company specializing in the assessment of competence in workplaces. For the crane certification program, its professional assessors are highly experienced crane operators and former crane apprenticeship instructors.

Fulford's program is insured by Lloyd's of London, having met rigorous requirements for the training and supervision of its professional assessors.

The ITA is responsible for certifying tower crane operators, and all new mobile crane and boom truck operators. The practical assessment services are provided by FHG on behalf of both WorkSafeBC and the ITA.

5. What does crane operator certification mean under the new Regulation?

A certificate issued by the FHG or the ITA will be proof that the operator has met the standard for competency. The holder of the certificate will have demonstrated the basic standard knowledge, skills and ability to operate a crane safely.

The certificate will also identify the crane-types the operator is certified to operate and specify any restrictions.

Employers will still be obliged to maintain proper documentation and ensure the operator uses the crane in accordance with all standards for workplace safety.

6. How many crane operators are there in BC?

There are approximately 12,000 tower, boom and mobile crane operators working in BC who have applied to be assessed for certification.

7. What cranes are required to have certified operators?

The new Regulation applies to operators of boom trucks, mobile cranes, and tower cranes.

Cranes either under five tons, or with a boom length less than 25 feet are exempt. These sizes are defined by the original manufacturer's specifications. Bridge cranes are not included in this regulation.

8. What are the most common crane incidents?

- Cranes contacting high voltage power lines
- Cranes tipping over
- Booms bending because of overloading
- Materials falling because of improperly secured loads or rigging
- Structural failure of the crane itself
- Incidents as a result of poor communication between the operator and site personnel

9. When will WorkSafeBC prevention officers start enforcing this new regulation?

As of July 1, 2007, officers may issue orders to employers and/or operators if the uncertified operator does not possess the registration document issued by the BCACS or the appropriate competence certificate.

10. How are existing operators being accommodated?

Pending practical assessment, existing operators who have registered with BCACS can continue to operate cranes.

In order to have each operator prepared and ready to meet the established criteria prior to assessment, resource guides are available at www.fulford.ca. A study of these guides prior to assessment is highly recommended.

11. Once certified, do crane operators need to renew their crane operator certification?

At this time, there are no plans to have crane operators renew their certification after their initial, successful assessments.

Training

12. Are training standards available for review?

Free information on standards is available through www.fulford.ca. A processing fee to cover printing and distribution costs is required for those who request a hard copy of the standards.

13. Will the BCACS offer training courses?

No, the BCACS does not provide training to operators. Only public and private trainers offer this service. The operator or employer must carefully select a trainer that will meet their needs as BCACS does not endorse any training provider.

14. How should a trainer be selected?

Guidance for choosing an acceptable trainer can be found in the WorkSafeBC article “How to hire a safety training provider,” available at www.worksafebc.com and www.bcacs.ca.

At a minimum, a training provider should be asked:

- Do you follow the BCACS standards as set by industry?
- Are your instructors registered with BCACS?
- Have your instructors been assessed and certified?
- What percentage of students taking your crane operator certification training have passed on their first attempt?
- If taking a course intended to count towards the requirements for an ITA Certificate of Qualification, ensure the training provider is designated by the ITA to offer the specific course at the specific location.

15. Can I train my own people?

Yes, the employer can provide in house training as long as they meet the standards as defined through this process.

Registration

16. What about operators who registered with the BCACS prior to July 1, 2007?

All operators who registered before July 1, 2007 are incumbent operators. They will not be required to complete the written theory assessment. Their theory knowledge will be assessed during the practical assessment.

17. How can a worker get more information on the Regulation or Guidelines, and register with the BCACS?

More information on the Regulation or Guidelines is available at <http://www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/Part14.asp>. Workers can register at www.bcacs.ca.

18. What is the next step for an operator who registered before July 1, 2007 and received a letter of confirmation?

Beginning in December 2008, information will be mailed to registrants who can then make an appointment for assessment. Workers will be contacted in the same order that they registered with BCACS.

Once this letter is received, the operator is to contact FHG to begin the assessment process.

Operator Assessment

19. What exams do incumbent crane operators need to successfully complete in order to receive certification?

For crane operators who registered with the BC Association for Crane Safety (BCACS) before July 1, 2007, the Practical Examination is the only exam requirement. This practical exam is delivered by independent assessors from Fulford Harbour Group.

Crane operators who registered with the BCACS after July 1, 2007 are required to successfully complete the written ITA Certification of Qualification (C of Q) Examination and the Practical Examination.

20. When will a worker be ready for the practical assessment?

Before booking an assessment, the worker needs to understand and be able to answer correctly the examples and practice exercises found at www.fulford.ca.

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

Information packages describing each assessment are available at www.fulford.ca, or by contacting the FHG office. The packages are customized for each specific crane-type, which include the definitions and criteria as well as an overview of the assessment.

22. Must an operator obtain a minimum number of hours before challenging the theory or practical assessment?

While time is a requirement for tower crane operators, it is not a prerequisite for either boom truck, or mobile crane operators. More information is available at www.worksafebc.com or www.bcacs.ca.

23. How soon can an assessment take place?

For the majority of incumbent operators, an assessment will typically take place 3-4 weeks after the initial request. Operators will receive a reminder two weeks prior to their assessment once a booking has been confirmed.

24. How much does an assessment cost?

Each practical assessment costs \$500. This cost is the same for all crane types throughout the province. While the fee may be paid by any party, it must be paid in full prior to assessment.

Tower crane operators and all new operators of mobile cranes and boom trucks must also pay an additional \$120 to the Industry Training Authority in order to write the applicable ITA Certificate of Qualification or Interprovincial Red Seal exam.

25. What is included in the practical assessment?

Information on the practical assessment is available at www.fulford.ca.

For those unable to access the internet, a hard copy is available (subject to processing fee). Contact the Fulford Harbour Group Assessment Office at 604-952-6033, or 1-877-952-6033 for more details.

26. What if an operator fails either the theory or practical assessment?

The assessment has two main parts: the theory (load chart and rigging) component and the on-crane practical component. If the applicant succeeds on one component, but not the other, they can challenge to be re-assessed on that particular part.

An operator who fails any portion of the assessment will be provided with their results and an action plan to improve their skills.

Pending successful re-assessment, the operators of mobile and tower cranes will be able to work under indirect supervision while refreshing the skills through study or training.

If the operator fails the re-assessment, they are required to undergo immediate upgrade training and will be re-assessed as soon as possible.

27. What about boom truck operators who fail either the theory or practical assessment?

Because they cannot be directly supervised, boom truck operators must successfully challenge the assessment or re-assessment before continuing to operate their equipment type. To minimize any interruption for the employer and/or worker, the boom truck operators will be given priority for re-assessment.

Boom truck operators are advised to study the assessment requirements and work through the practical exercises provided in the “Getting Ready for Your Assessment Guide” available at www.fulford.ca before booking an assessment appointment.

28. How soon can an unsuccessful applicant be re-assessed?

Once the operator is ready, the first re-assessment can take place once an assessor is available – typically two weeks after the initial assessment. If the reassessment is on the load chart and rigging component, then the worker can make an appointment for an available space at the test centre. (Provide address of FHG)

Operators who are prohibited from working as a result of their initial assessment will receive priority for re-assessment.