Crane Operators Make The Grade With Training

Employee training has a bottom-line impact on ROI, according to Jim Lang, General Manager of the Konecranes Training Institute, a full-service training organization designed to help companies be more productive with their material handling. Investments in training can bring workforces to a higher level of proficiency, helping companies increase ROI over the entire lifecycle of their operations. As a protective measure, training can also reduce the risk of losses in both human terms and property damage.

Training the Trainer Brings Improved Efficiency and Cost Savings to National Oilwell Varco

According to the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), crane operators often do not have the necessary qualifications to operate each piece of equipment safely, and the operator qualifications required in the existing

regulations may not provide adequate guidance to employers. The risk of death among crane operators alone is significant, corresponding to a risk of more than one death per thousand workers over a lifetime of 45 years, according to OSHA's Crane Safety Task Group. In addition to serious safety risks, poorly trained crane operators can inflict damaging and unnecessary wear and tear on overhead cranes.

When NOV in Houston, Texas, began searching for a strong crane operator training program that could increase safety and awareness at multiple NOV facilities, the company singled out the Overhead Crane Train-the-Trainer course from the Konecranes Training Institute. The program provides a cost-effective approach to training personnel, presenting future trainers with basic to complex information, and equipping them with instructional skills to train employees internally throughout a company.

"Of all the training programs I reviewed, the Institute presented the best course outline, offering the most comprehensive coverage within a good time frame," says Christy Exley, Health, Safety, Environment (HSE) Manager at NOV in Houston. "The Institute offers a true train-the-trainer class," says Exley. "One of its greatest benefits is that the instructor teaches not only overhead crane operation, but the basics of becoming an effective instructor."

There are more than 300 NOV facilities in the United States, where overhead cranes are used extensively to manufacture systems and components for oil and gas drilling and production applications. Some NOV facilities house more than 200 overhead cranes that vary in size and lifting capacity. "Many NOV employees have the express duty of operating the overhead cranes," says Exley, "and may have limited experience operating a crane." Further, NOV manufactures very unique equipment, explains Exley, and it was critical that crane operators received instruction relevant to NOV's processes.

In the fall of 2008, several NOV facilities throughout the country received on-site Train-the-Trainer instruction from the Institute. NOV crane operators with varying levels of experience, from as few as two years to as many as twenty-five, participated in the training program. The instructors put their knowledge in layman's terms, notes Exley, and performed hands-on training to show employees proper rigging techniques, load ratings, and inspections on their own equipment. "Even employees with more than fifteen years of experience working in the manufacturing environment said they came away from the course having learned something new," says Exley.

Vernon Miller, corporate HSE regional manager for NOV, says that NOV employees received the knowledge to move forward safely. "Looking back on the accomplishments my group has made this past year, the Institute training is the number-one selected achievement that was accomplished," says Miller.

Training Maximizes Uptime and Reduces Total Incidents

Another leading producer of structural steel and steel products set its sights on improving quality of crane inspections and reducing total incidents. The Institute

trained more than 300 crane operators and maintenance staff at the customer's site in Nebraska. Ninety-eight percent of those in attendance said the training met or exceeded their expectations, based on post-course surveys.

Prior to the customer site employee training, four employees from this company had completed the Konecranes Training Institute's Train-the-Trainer course. The success of that training prompted the plant-wide production and maintenance staff enrollment in on-site courses. Employees in attendance included those who operated cranes as frequently as every day and as little as once a year.

The on-site training was structured to improve maintenance and pre-operation crane inspections which will help to reduce crane incidents and maximize uptime in the general day-to-day manufacturing process. Course material addressed all overhead cranes used at that location, from overhead cab operated cranes to overhead remote cranes and pendant control cranes. According to the customer's mechanical maintenance supervisor, employees have been catching more issues during maintenance inspections since completing training from the Institute.

In addition to improving productivity, efficiency, and safety, crane and hoist training from the Konecranes Institute can be a critical component to any preventative maintenance program. Lang references one particular customer of the Institute whose overall operator efficiency increased after completing a three-day Bucket/Grapple Crane Operator course. Their training investment, less than $10K, resulted in a savings of more than $100K in repairs, downtime, and wire rope replacements. Although the performance objectives vary across material handling industries, manufacturers in any industry can have both training and monetary savings, obtaining immediate and long-term profitability.

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To find out more about the Konecranes Training Institute, contact Jim Lang, General Manager, Konecranes Training Institute, 262.821.4001, or visit www.konecranesamericas.com *[1].*

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