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CRAC CONFERENCE

## New Canadian safety organization aiming for national harmonization

JEFFREY CARTER

**A** new industry organization is looking to make it easier for crane operators to cross provincial and even international borders to meet job demands.

As executive director of the B.C. Association for Crane Safety, Fraser Cocks has been helping to move the west coast industry in that direction. Now the Canadian Hoisting and Rigging Safety Council, which Cocks chairs, looks to bring regulatory harmonization to all of Canada.

“The model today is not what it used to be when operators who lived in an area worked in the same area,” Cocks said during a speech at the Crane Rental Association of Canada's recent annual conference in Toronto.

What's developed in places like Northern Alberta, parts of Saskatchewan and in Labrador is what Cocks refers to as the fly-in/fly-out model. That's when additional crane operators are brought in on a temporary basis when the demand for their services spikes.

It's important that their credentials are recognized and that labour market information requirements do not become an unnecessary barrier. Cocks said improved safety and decreased costs are additional objectives.

“We have the Red Seal but that's the theory part. We want the practical part as well,” he said.

(The Red Seal Program was developed more than 50 years ago as a partnership between the federal, provincial and territorial governments to provide greater mobility across Canada for skilled workers.)

To explain the motivations behind the national council, Cocks talked about the B.C. situation.

The province began to move toward a crane certification system in 2005 with the founding of the B.C. Association for Crane Safety. There was no regulatory system at the time and there had been problems.

The B.C. group answers to a board of directors, industry members, and works with WorksafeBC, the Industry Training Authority of B.C. and the B.C. Safety Authority.

As of February 2011, crane certification became mandatory in B.C. Existing crane operators had been provided with a two-year, phase-in period to become certified.

As of this past April, credentials to nearly 10,000 operators had been issued.

“Most people are surprised at this number,” Cocks said. “We had thought there would be from 3,000 to 5,000.”

The B.C. association is now working with people from outside B.C., especially operators from Alberta, who require an equivalency certificate to work in the province. Toward that end, the B.C. government has agreed to recognize operators already certified in another province or territory.

The competencies of out-of-province operators must be “consistent with, and within the scope of” competencies required for the same occupation in B.C.



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~ Fraser Cocks, chair,  
Canadian Hoisting and Rigging Safety Council

The next step for the B.C. Association for Crane Safety was to assess the credentials of other certification bodies, including those in Washington State. That proved a complex undertaking. In the U.S., there are four different certification bodies.

Fortunately, Cocks said, those groups were willing to allow him to look closely at their certification requirements.

Three gaps were identified from this process. Regulatory requirements differed in some respects. There is little rigging content in the U.S. approach. There were also differences in practical assessment.

“We've opened the door to the U.S. The door is cracked open a bit – essentially between B.C. and Washington,” Cocks said.

The same type of process needs to take place in Canada, he said. That's where the Canadian Hoisting and Rigging Safety Council can play a role.

Challenges include developing consistent standards, competency standards and assessment methods.

Asked about a timeline, Cocks said the council currently has about 18 months of funding available.

Other members of the council include vice-chair Tom Bennett of Northern Crane Services, secretary Gunnar Mardon of the B.C. Association for Crane Safety, treasurer Dave Earle of Construction Labour Relations B.C., Daryl Harvey of Cenovus, and Lorne Kleppe of the Manufacturers Health and Safety Association.

The council membership is open to all interested parties including crane companies, training providers, suppliers and manufacturers, standard organizations, regulators and construction companies. For more information visit the council's website at [www.chrsc.ca](http://www.chrsc.ca).

