

COMMENT

When it comes to lifting, due diligence means safety

Employers and their supervisors are responsible for monitoring their employees regularly to ensure safe work practices

JUDY MELLOTT-GREEN | SPECIAL TO CRANE & HOIST CANADA

“Due diligence” — these two words are beginning to have a major impact in all areas of business and industry worldwide.

Canadian federal laws and occupational health and safety regulations define due diligence as “doing everything reasonably practicable” to prevent a failure or injury. In most regions, regulations are demanding more of employers by making them “explicitly responsible” for providing proper objective evidence of due diligence for worker safety and worksite safety.

Due diligence is becoming a minimum requirement to provide objective evidence for nearly everything we do.



Judy Mellott-Green

For the operation of overhead lifting equipment, this means there must be documented procedures implemented for daily crane operations, inspections, rigging applications, training, monitoring of worker performance, internal auditing, and corrective actions. Having these processes and procedures properly implemented and maintained will ensure the operator is continuously working in accordance with the safety training received, and is meeting minimum compliance requirements.

All employers and their supervisory representatives are responsible for monitoring workers at a frequency that ensures workers are working in accordance with safe work practices. (Supervisory representatives include health and environmental safety personnel, foremen, lead-hands, designated operators, and anyone else responsible for supervision of workers.) To ensure worker competency, employer representatives need to monitor workers performing these safe-working practices. Best practice

dictates that this monitoring (such as observations and internal audits) be programmed or incidental and be documented.

This documentation should be at frequency that satisfies external scrutiny such as regulatory authorities and corporate auditors. In order to perform these audits, employer representatives need to have a level of safe work practice competency.

Best practice also dictates that unless an employer's representative is already competent in the safe work practice the best way to attain that competency is to attend the same training as the workers. This way, the employer's representative can apply the safe work practice criteria as a part of his or her programmed or incidental observations. This is the only way to ensure worker competency on the job, as anything less is only a “compliance safety certificate.”

At present, it is common practice for large organizations to make each location independently responsible for selecting a training vendor to provide the safety training. There is no consistency and very little traceability for monitoring this method of training to the corporate office.

Standardizing this safety training, however, would ensure the training is delivered exactly the same at every company location in Canada and the United States. Each location would then only need to include applicable jurisdictional requirements and work instructions unique to applications at their location. A standardized safety training program is a time-efficient and cost-effective way of ensuring the training provided is consistent throughout the organization.

Compliance: Courseware material content should be audited annually by an industry-expert professional engineer, to ensure compliance with the most current jurisdictional codes, regulations, and standards.

Why is this important? Safer work sites provide assurance that the safety training meets the minimum compliance requirements of all applicable national and international standards. In the event of an accident or injury these audits also reduce responsibility of liability for trainers, instructors, and clients.

Competency training: A main industry concern is the lack of being able to maintain internal safety training provided by an in-house program or external training provider. Safety training programs should teach how to develop, document and implement processes for continuously monitoring workers.

Why is this important? With proper continuous supervision, a worker's newly learned safe work practices will become routine daily practices. The final result is the “worker is competent” in performing all related job tasks.



Judy Mellott-Green, CEO of All Canadian Training Institute Inc., supervises crane safety training.
Photo courtesy of All Canadian Training Institute Inc.

Due diligence: An operator daily logbook makes it easier to perform crane start-up and shutdown checks simply and consistently, including instructions on how to perform load calculations properly. The logbook provides the supervisor with a copy of the completed checklist to ensure maintenance issues are responded to and tracked.

Why is this important? Not everyone uses a crane every day. The logbook serves as a “how to” reminder. When a supervisor responds to reported maintenance issues, it shows an awareness of the importance for maintaining equipment. It is also “objective evidence” that the operators are performing and documenting all the daily required safety tasks.

Objective records: Effective safety programming teaches how to extend the corporate health and safety program's “training element” to include safety training for workers and instructions for monitoring.

Why is this important? This lays the ground work for developing unique instructions applicable to equipment that requires a start-up, shut-down and is documented in a logbook.

Safety training pays: When safety training programs and methodology are properly implemented and maintained, the company will realize a reduction of all applicable non-tangible costs, such as from accidents, injuries, unnecessary breakdowns due to misuse and abuse, insurance, worker compensation rates, and personnel-injury lawsuits. Loss of production time alone can run into tens of thousands of dollars per hour, without taking into consideration the cost of parts and repairs. Proper training will ensure a safer work environment for workers utilizing hoisting, rigging hardware, and material handling as part of their job tasks.

Judy Mellott-Green is the president of Edmonton-based All Canadian Training Institute Inc. (ACTi) 1994. For further information go to the website www.actisafety.ca.

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