

Just for the record

As news of the Construction Industry Training Board's new tower crane operator training course launched last month has spread throughout the industry, so seems to have concern among some of its members. *C&A* reports.



SINCE the launch of the course last month (see news *C&A* April/May) a number of individuals in the UK tower crane industry have approached *C&A* with concerns that the course appears to reflect that a skill that takes years to perfect can be condensed into a number of theoretical modules.

'It seems to suggest that somebody could walk right off the street, buy the course, sit down in front of a PC and, 18 modules later, claim to be a proficient tower crane erector and dismantler,' protested one industry member. This was the first of many such comments, so *C&A* decided to take a closer look and confront those behind the course.

First and foremost, both the Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA) and the CITB – who collaborated with the Construction Confederation (CCC) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in developing the course – made it very clear that it is intended to be taken over an extended time period, during which participants will receive hands on experience with a tower crane erection team. They were also adamant to point out that the course should be part of a long-term training programme and not as a replacement.

The driving force behind the course has been to establish a consistent industry standard for the training of tower crane installation operatives, setting out in plain English the regulations to be observed, the best advice and current working practices. The intention is to extend this by establishing a formal NVQ within a year or so that could then become part of a modern apprenticeship programme offered by contractors and rental companies.

Until now, there have been no common standards for the training of tower crane installation personnel. Individual companies have tended to adhere to their own training methods, which have inevitably lead to varying levels of comprehension.

The CITB course will not change this in anyway, but it will at least show that a person has had a certain level of basic training. A

company could alternatively choose to use the tests in each module to verify a new employees' capabilities or, the course modules could be used as part of refresher courses for existing employees.

THE THEORY

The course has been "driven" by the CPA's Tower Crane Interest Group (TCIG), chaired by Paul Phillips of tower crane hire company HTC, and has included most manufacturers, large tower crane rental companies and contractors. It consists of 18 stand-alone modules, and while these vary from 'Safety Awareness' (Module 2) to 'Tying Tower cranes to adjacent buildings & structures' (Module 12) (See box for full list course components), the programme makes it very clear that an operative wishing to become a leading erector/supervisor will need additional training, skills and hands-on experience.

The course contains numerous tips and instructions, along with written tests and evaluation techniques, to aid the trainer who should him/herself be a highly experienced tower crane erector with the ability to effectively communicate to, and train, his/her students. This could be an in-house trainer, or, given time, the course could be delivered at specialist training schools. The CITB already offers a basic tower crane erection course at its Bircham Newton facility in Norfolk and suggests that tower crane specialists, such as a rental company, would benefit from having its operational staff complete at least 7 out of the 18 modules on offer.

The HSE has "commended" the use of this course for those who have duties under the Health and Safety at work act of 1974, and will reference this course when and where appropriate. The full 18-module course costs £85 and is available from the CITB-Construction skills publications sales on tel: [44] (0) 1485 577800 fax: [44] (0) 577758 email: publications@citb.co.uk, or on line at www.citb.co.uk/publications

The CITB says that tower crane rental companies will benefit from having their operational staff complete at least 7 out of the 18 modules on offer from its new tower crane course.

THE 18 MODULES MAKING UP THE CITB'S TOWER CRANE COURSE ARE;

- Module 1 Introduction to the industry
- Module 2 Safety awareness
- Module 3 Basic tool skills
- Module 4 Working on site
- Module 5 Basic principles of crane erection, dismantle & stability
- Module 6 Practice of erecting and dismantling tower cranes
- Module 7 Assisting with examination & testing, the erectors role
- Module 8 Preparing equipment for use
- Module 9 Loading and unloading components for transport
- Module 10 Wire ropes, specialist tools and equipment
- Module 11 Operation of tower cranes during erection/dismantle
- Module 12 Tying tower cranes to adjacent buildings & structures
- Module 13 External and internal climbing of tower cranes
- Module 14 Limit setting and functional testing
- Module 15 Product familiarisation/operational handover procedure
- Module 16 Servicing and maintenance of tower cranes
- Module 17 Statutory examinations, inspections and checks
- Module 18 Carrying out site surveys as part of installations planning