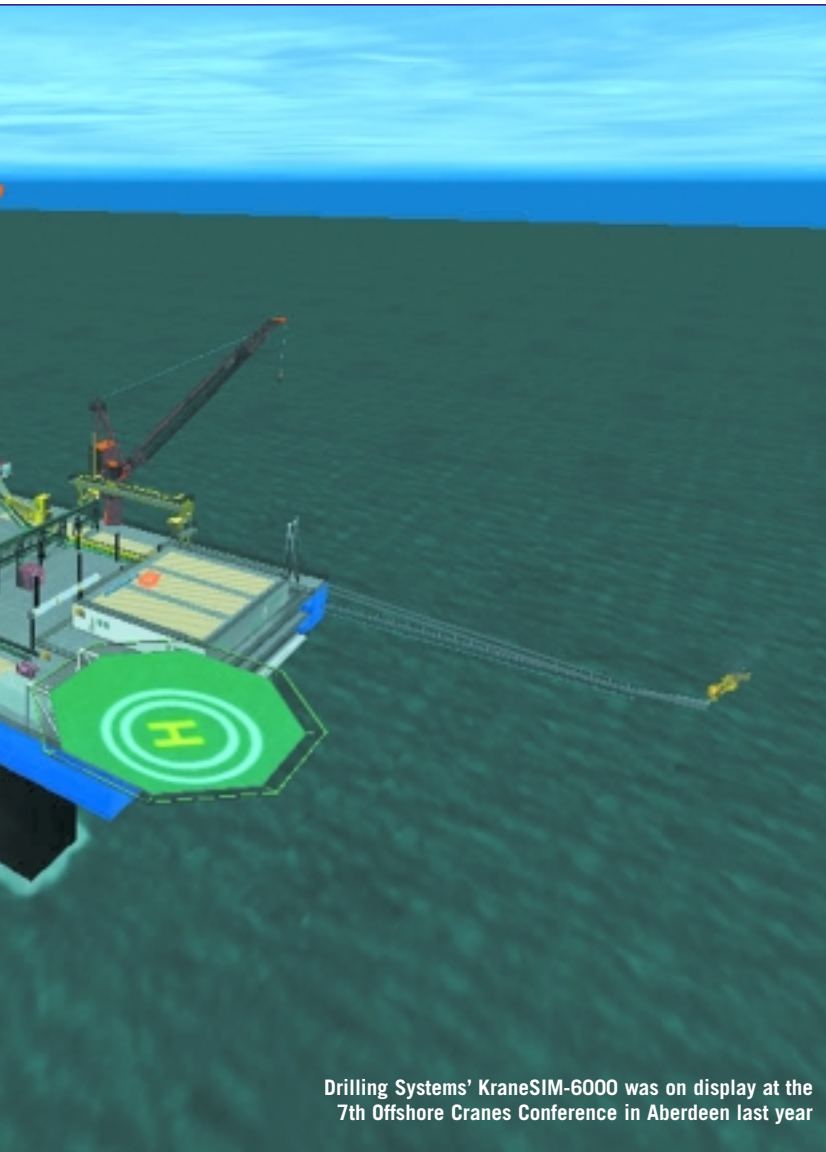


TRAINING



Practice ma

Training. Talk to any lifting industry professional, read any manual or take note of any guideline and one word will crop up time and time again – ‘competency’. And it seems that big efforts are being made in the UK to promote it. *C&A* reports



Drilling Systems' KraneSIM-6000 was on display at the 7th Offshore Cranes Conference in Aberdeen last year

akes perfect

IT IS impossible to ignore the pace at which the construction industry has progressed in recent times and how it continues to do so today. The constant introduction of new technology, however, usually goes hand in hand with increasingly tight regulations and legislation.

But are the industry's personnel keeping up with the law enforcers? It would seem that the Certificate of Training Achievement (CTA) Scheme suggests not. It says that its recent amalgamation with the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) is a major move for the construction industry towards achieving a fully qualified workforce.

In terms of crane operation, the CTA card for some time now has been widely seen as the most highly regarded registration scheme, but the CTA management committee has said that it sees room for improvement, particularly where proof of competency of its members are concerned.

The joining of the two schemes will see the CTA card develop into the CPCS card with membership oriented around actual physical experience and competency of plant operation, rather than simply being proof of training, as was the case with the CTA card. The CITB will continue to administer the new scheme.

Crane and access equipment operators holding the existing CTA card will have their cards changed throughout the second half of 2003, with the new CPCS card becoming valid on January 1, 2004. From this point CTA cards will cease to be valid.

During the transition period, existing CTA operators will also be sent a logbook, which will be used to record their operating hours in preparation for their card renewal. The CPCS has three cards available, the first of

► 38

TRAINING

which will provide proof that the operator has completed the relevant Intermediate Construction Award (ICA). The second and third cards will indicate an operator's competency and show ongoing experience of operating plant. There will be no extra cost for existing CTA cardholders.

Operators without any experience looking to obtain a CPCS card will have to comply with the first two requirements of the original CTA scheme and pass the CPCS foundation training and Achievement Test. This will grant them a logbook, and a Trained Operator card which will be valid for three years. To achieve the full competence card the operator will need to have logged 300 hours of operation, pass the Specialised Plant and Machinery Operations NVQ Level 2 and pass the plant Health and Safety test within the last two years.

The CTA card covers almost every type of crane apart from gantry cranes and self-erecting tower cranes, but as Mike Harvey, CPCS product manager comments: "This is being discussed by the CPCS management committee and it is very likely that the two crane types will be included in the new card scheme in the not too distant future."

C&A asked Paul Adorian, IPAF's managing director, if there is likely to be any competition between the CPCS scheme and IPAF's own PAL card. "Absolutely not" was the short answer. "Since the outset of our training scheme, many of our training centres have provided CTA training alongside our own," continues Adorian. "The steady trend has been a polarisation towards those cards that are most widely recognised.

It is, however, important to recognise that there are fundamental differences between our PAL card and what is now the CPCS. This reflects the distinctly different patterns of usage of general construction plant and platforms.

"For most construction plant operators, that is their principal job. In contrast, many who operate platforms in the industry have an entirely different basic trade or skill, such as steel operators and painters. They simply use the platform as an additional 'tool' to help them get their 'real' job done safely and effectively.

"Another important aspect of platform usage is that it now covers such a wide range of industries in addition to construction. Platforms are now becoming increasingly popular in such diverse applications as industrial cleaning and aircraft maintenance and within industries from petrochemicals to outside broadcast media. To all these sectors, a construction-specific scheme is not relevant; they need one that relates to platform operation in general. industry-wide recognition is important too, especially as there are dedicated platform operators employed by rental organisations for instance who need to work across a variety of different industries.

"Because the IPAF training scheme is specific to MEWPs and MCWPs, it provides unquestionably the most thorough, wide ranging and recognised scheme in the UK and Europe. We provide training on every type of MEWP including complex specialist units, underbridge platforms and insulated boom trucks as well as offering courses for MCWP installers and demonstrators,

"Because the IPAF training scheme is specific to MEWPs and MCWPs, it provides unquestionably the most thorough, wide ranging and recognised scheme in the UK and Europe."

whereas the majority of other training organisations, including the former CTA, only provide training on self propelled booms and scissors.

"Competence is another important issue," says Adorian. "Now contributing to the CPCS acronym, IPAF has regarded this as vital since 1999, when it first issued log books to operators along with their PAL card. Training is just one, vital, step on the road to demonstrable competence."

Strength in numbers

Competition between varying schemes is not really the issue here, rather the fact that they are in place, are accessible and perhaps most importantly, are credible. IPAF's 100,00 PAL holders and the predicted 500,000 CPCS members (the CITB was unable to disclose what proportion of this number will be made up of crane operators) have been processed by the likes of Nationwide and Ainscough which now offer fully approved training courses for the crane and access industries.

A management buy-out of Ainscough's training department from what was Ainscough Group in 2001 created Ainscough Training Services. "Within six months of starting the new business we identified a niche in the training of lifting operations outside of the normal construction industry sector," says Ian Fisher, director of training development. "We developed a five year strategy that would target other sections where lifting takes place such as the use of overhead cranes in engineering and manufacturing, knuckle booms in transportation, tower cranes and mobile cranes for construction and MEWPS in the access sector. We now promote ourselves as 'Specialist Trainers in the Management & Supervision of Lifting Operations'."

Ainscough Training Services provides a range of courses, including crane operator foundation training, appointed person, safety awareness, slinger and signaller, BS7121 (safe use of cranes), mobile elevated work platforms and forklift operations.

"We take a lead role in promoting the CITB/CTA registration scheme," continues Fisher. "We are strong believers in the quality of training for lifting and we encourage employers to recognise their duties under Lifting Operations & Lifting Equipment Regulations and Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

Training offshore

THE HEALTH & Safety Executive (HSE) has sponsored research and offered its full support to Drilling Systems UK for the development of a training simulator for offshore crane operators. Jim MacFarlane, HM Inspector of Health & Safety, says that the 'hands on' simulator will be used to assess a crane operator's reactions to a variety of emergency situations that can occur during actual offshore lifting operations.

"In this way, the operator can develop skills in a safe environment under the supervision of an instructor," says MacFarlane. "It is intended that the simulator be used by suitable training organisations to help assess and improve the competency of offshore crane operators and other personnel who are involved with other aspects of lifting operations."

The KraneSIM-6000 was launched at the 7th Offshore Cranes Conference in Aberdeen last year, following a 'Key Programme of work', launched by the HSE in 2001, of which the aim was "to reduce the number of offshore lifting and mechanical handling accidents and dangerous occurrences by 15 per cent over a three-year period". A report published by Drilling Systems states that: "One element of this [the HSE's programme] is to increase awareness of the issues and seek to improve and monitor the competence of personnel involved with offshore lifting operations,



especially crane operators," and that "traditional training courses cannot usually provide the type of operating conditions that may give rise to accidents if inappropriate actions are taken."

The KraneSIM-6000 is based on a 65 tonne capacity, Kenz DHC 65/3500 O.S. diesel hydraulic crane because it was seen as typical of the rope luff crane designs used throughout the UK offshore sector.

Mathematical models are used to simulate a wide scope of operating variants, such as high winds, stormy seas, while the actual operating area is an offshore rig environment, comprising a semi-submersible, floating platform, from which the loading and unloading of containers, pipe racks, anchors, personnel baskets and chemical tanks and containers to or from moving vessels takes place. ■

"The construction industry has recognised the need for training, albeit through accidents, followed by investigation, followed by legislation. However, many industries are failing to recognise that lifting is crucial to the operations. For example, transportation would see the knuckle boom as the tool for getting goods on and off vehicles in order to transport the goods, when in fact the actual lifting of those goods is dealt with very separately under legislation with its own code of practice. We have identified this and are dealing with it."

And it's true, the construction industry has most definitely recognised the need for training. This is nowhere more apparent than in the HSE

Construction Division's 'current continuation of the national rolling programme of blitzes' that are taking place across East and South East England.

"The number of deaths and serious injuries in the construction industry is unacceptably high," says HSE Inspector Philip White. "Plant, vehicles and lifting operations count for some 30 per cent of fatalities in construction and are the cause of a very significant proportion of the fatal and serious injuries in this region. We will seek to identify poor standards and may take form and enforcement action, including prosecution, where the law is flouted and persons are put at risk."

One aspect covered in the visits may include that of safe lifting operations. A statement released

by the HSE states that: "inspectors will wish to check whether a crane is a "crane hire" or "contract lift", and: who is appointed to plan the lift, who is supervising the lift and whether there is a lifting plan or method statement. Particular attention will be paid to lifting plan information about the lifting tackle to be used, the competency of those persons given the task of slinging loads and the specification of the mobile crane outrigger support".

So, you have been warned. And if you're getting shivers down your spine and have broken out into a cold sweat while taking note of the above, you're probably getting a feel of just how 'competent' you really are.

C&A

Scaffold school

THE UK'S National Construction College (NCC), the training division of the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), says that its new scaffold training facility, recently opened at its Erith, Kent facility, is now the largest and most modern of its kind in the UK. The 32 metre², indoor facility was officially opened by CITB chairman, Sir Michael Latham on February 20, and will increase the college's training throughput by up to 50 per cent.

Course attendees will train in all types of scaffolds, ranging from basic systems to complex scaffolds such as cantilever drops. The CITB currently offers a wide range of industry training courses, ranging from the CTA scheme to specific courses such as Appointed Persons Safety Officers (crane), across its four National Construction Colleges based in the East, South, Midlands and Scotland.

Highlighting the current industry recruitment drive, Andy Newell, plant training manager at the NCC, says that the NCC's Appointed Persons

Genie recently donated a GS-4390 self-propelled rough terrain scissor lift to the National Construction College's East division.



The National Construction College's new entrant Crane Operator course is the only one of its kind in the industry to be targeted at 18-year old school leavers



(Lifting Operations) is one of the most popular courses at present. "It's an intensive course and personnel selection is critical," he says. "Entry requirement stipulates that attendees should be existing supervisors and managers with a responsibility for lifting operations who have sufficient experience of the use of cranes to meet the requirements specified in British Standard 7121."

The College also receives large demand for its Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) courses for both operators and mechanics. It says that annual investment in new plant equipment and excellent links with manufacturers has enabled the NCC to maintain one of the most modern fleets of access platforms in the training industry. Last year saw Genie donate a £30,000 GS-4390 self-propelled rough terrain scissor lift to the NCC's East division, which is currently used in all aspects of plant mechanic training.

A brand new JLG 450AJ boom lift is also currently on long-term loan to the College. "Lending a boom for use with CTA and IPAF-

accredited courses is an excellent way for a manufacturer to ensure that operators are fully up-to-date with MEWP technology," says Gary Fleckney, UK area sales manager at JLG.

The NCC also says that its new entrant Crane Operator course is the only one of its kind in the industry to be targeted at 18-year old school leavers and follows the NVQ Level 2 apprentice framework. "With a current shortage of skilled crane operators in the UK, the new entrant Crane Operator course is an important one for the future of the industry," says a College spokesperson. "We are always working hard to recruit young people into the crane and access industries." ■

For further details of cranes and access courses at the NCC contact:

Tel: 08457 336666 for adult courses or 08457 577669 for apprentice courses.