Crane and Hoist Safety Practices

In an average year, injuries caused by working with or near cranes, hoists and similar equipment account for approximately 1,000 lost-time claims annually in this state. There are certain safety rules that must be followed by everyone who works with or near this type of equipment.

First let's talk about the safety precautions for workers in the operating areas of cranes or hoists, but who are not directly involved with their operation or use. Stay alert and pay attention to the warning signal from overhead hoisting equipment.

- Never stand or walk under a load, whether it's moving or stationary.
- Always warn others of moving and approaching overhead loads.
- Never attempt to distract signal persons or operators of the overhead equipment while they are performing their jobs.
- Always obey warning signs, especially those that are posted in critical areas

Now let's discuss the safety rules for operators, signal persons and hookup crews.

- Check to see that the equipment you are about to operate has been recently inspected. (This may not be necessary if the operator has been assigned to the same piece of equipment for a period of time.)
- Test the warning signal or device to make sure it is working properly.
- Never operate a crane that is unsafe.
- Before starting work, check the brakes and all controls.
- Never permit an unauthorized person to operate the crane or give the signals.
- Always be sure that the operator and signal persons are in direct and clear view, or in communication by phone.
- Never carry a load over other workers.
- Always use warning signals before and during moves.
- Never allow anyone to ride on the load or hooks.
- If a load appears to be slung improperly, lower it and have it adjusted.
- When oiling, adjusting or repairing the equipment, always lock the main control in the off position or have someone guard it.

The work of riggers and hookup crews is extremely important, because much of the safe operation of overhead cranes and hoists depends upon their knowledge and skill. All members of the crew must know their job responsibilities and the proper procedures. Correct placement of the sling or choker, or of the chain, contribute to safe lift travel and positioning of the load. The placement controls the balance and how the system will handle on the hook throughout the operation.

Sometimes the crew must determine whether a tag line is needed to control the motion and position of the load while it's in the air. Knowing how to place and manipulate the tag line safely requires skill and alertness. Safe operation of crane and hoisting equipment requires efficient teamwork and a thorough knowledge of the skills involved.