

How Certification Contributes to the Safety of Digger Derrick Operators

Utility Construction

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Do Digger Derrick Operators ever have to be certified? Yes, digger derrick operators have to be certified when performing lift work that does not fall under Subpart V.

Jerry Rivera, Director of Safety for the National Electrical Contractor Association, provided explanation in a January 2013 issue of Electrical Contractor magazine. He said: "Digger derricks used in construction related activities, such as installation of traffic signals, lighting and other work not meeting the Subpart V definition, fall outside the exemption . . . employers still have to ensure that digger derrick operators have been trained and are proficient in the safe operation of such equipment prior to use."

Should Digger Derrick Operators be certified when performing work that does fall under Subpart V? No, unless . . . the operator's work occasionally, rarely, sometimes falls outside of the realm of Subpart V.

Each employer will have to evaluate the work being performed by the derrick digger operators in their company. Is the operation purely and exclusively limited to work that is covered by Subpart V? If so, the operator does not have to be certified. If, however, the work occasionally, rarely, sometimes falls outside of the realm of Subpart V, the operator does have to be certified.

Regardless, there is a more important factor to consider. The employer's first responsibility is to the safety of the workers and the people near the work in progress. If the digger derrick is commonly used for construction work, the employer should also consider that certified operators have significantly better safety records. The average cost of certification is a few hundred dollars a year over the five year life of a certification. Clearly, that is a good business and moral investment when fewer accidents and deaths are the result of quality training and accredited certification.

OSHA regulations are rules based on "Do this" or "Don't do this" to avoid citations, fines, and OSHA's Wall of Shame. OSHA compliance alone does not make a well-defined safety program that prevents accidents and increases productivity. Numerous studies show that construction projects using qualified personnel are more likely to be completed on time, on budget, and with fewer accidents.

If the operators in your company operate a digger derrick for its primary function, to auger holes and set poles, there may be little need or value in the certification of that operator. If the operator and machine, are used for construction work that requires the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a crane operator—safety—not regulations, should be the determining factor. Saving lives, and preventing accidents is the smart business and life decision.

Your decision to certify should consider the following questions.

- What is our company's safety standard?
- Do our digger derrick operators ever perform lift work that does not fall under Subpart V?
- What is the skill difference in the lift work the operators do under Subparts V and CC?
- For the lift work covered under Subpart V, would our safety program be better if operators were certified?

Compare the wording. Know the regulation but make your decisions based on safety.

For your reference

1. The exemption: 1926 Subpart CC part 1400 Scope (c) Exemptions (4) Digger Derricks when used for auguring holes for poles carrying electric or telecommunication lines, placing and removing the poles, and for handling associated materials for installation on, or removal from, the poles, or when used for any other work subject to subpart V of this part. To be eligible for this exclusion, digger-derrick use in work subject to subpart V of this part must comply with all of the provisions of that subpart, and digger-derrick use in construction work for telecommunication service (as defined at Sec. 1910.268(s)(40)) must comply with all of the provisions of Sec. 1910.268.

2. Relevant Subpart V section: 1920.268(a)(1) sets forth safety and health standards that apply to the work conditions, practices, means, methods, operations, installations and processes performed at telecommunications centers and at telecommunications field installations, which are located outdoors or in building spaces used for such field installations. Center work includes the installation, operation, maintenance, rearrangement, and removal of communications equipment and other associated equipment in telecommunications switching centers. Field work includes the installation, operation, maintenance, rearrangement, and removal of conductors and other equipment used for signal or communication service, and of their supporting or containing structures, overhead or underground, on public or private rights of way, including buildings or other structures.

3. Subpart V section referenced in the exemption: 1910.268(s)(40) Telecommunication Service—The furnishing of a capability to signal

or communicate at a distance by means such as telephone, telegraph, police and fire alarm, community antenna television, or similar system, using wire, conventional cable, coaxial cable, wave guides, microwave transmission, or other similar means. See also 1910.168(j) (4) Derrick Trucks and Similar Equipment.

About Crane Institute Certification

Crane Institute Certification (CIC), Villa Rica, Ga., is an independent certifying organization providing OSHA recognized, NCCA and ANSI accredited certifications for mobile crane operators according to type and capacity, as well as rigger and signalperson certifications. CIC is committed to serving construction, utility and power generation, underground construction, manufacturing, and heavy industry by providing efficient and relevant certifications to meet or exceed OSHA requirements and industry best practices.

With CIC one Practical Exam can earn up to five certifications. Among the certification programs that CIC has recently released are for operators of Multi-Purpose Equipment, including Digger Derricks, Articulating Boom Cranes, and Service/Mechanics Trucks. Exam questions and tasks are relevant to real-world work sites. Exams are available in English and Spanish.

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