

Crane driver competence

1 Purpose

The purpose of this guidance note is to explain various changes to the requirements for the certification of crane drivers working in the Australian offshore petroleum industry in Commonwealth and Victorian designated coastal waters.

2 Background

Until 31 December 2004 there was only one government administered system in Australia for the accreditation of offshore crane drivers. The system was run by the Department of Industry and Resources (DoIR – now Department of Mines and Petroleum) and was restricted to the Western Australian designated coastal waters.

The system was introduced in July 1994 with the adoption by the Department of Occupational Health Safety and Welfare of Western Australia (DOHSA – now WorkSafe WA) of the “National Occupational Health and Safety Standard for Users and Operators of Industrial Equipment”. This change introduced a uniform national crane driver certification system with no provisions for an industry, e.g. offshore petroleum industry, specific crane driver certification.

The decision was made by the Western Australian Department Minerals and Energy (which later changed to DoIR) to supplement the National Certification System by introducing an offshore crane driver accreditation scheme in Western Australia.

Under the scheme offshore crane drivers were examined by WorkSafe WA registered and DoIR endorsed assessors.

Those who passed the exam were issued with the appropriate land based crane driver’s certificate (e.g. derrick or tower crane) by WorkSafe WA and a letter of endorsement from DoIR confirming their offshore entitlement.

The intent of the system was not to ensure that a certificate holder was competent to operate safely each make of a crane within the crane category for which he held the certificate, but rather to ensure that the certificate holder possessed the basic skills and knowledge to allow him to learn how to operate safely a specific crane on an offshore facility.

The responsibility for the crane specific training and the overall competence of the offshore crane driver remained with the operators of offshore facilities.

3 Current requirements for offshore crane drivers

The system for the accreditation of offshore crane drivers was discontinued by DoIR as of 1 January 2005. Currently, there is no government administered system for the accreditation or licensing of offshore crane drivers in Australia. There is, however, a unit of competence that has been assessed and endorsed under the government training and qualifications framework. See the section below on competency schemes.

Legislative requirement

The existing Commonwealth and Victorian state legislation has no requirement for the certification of a crane driver to operate a crane on an offshore petroleum facility. Schedule 3 to the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* requires, in Clause 9(2)(f), that the operator of a facility must:

'provide all members of the workforce, in appropriate languages, with the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary for them to carry out their activities in a manner that does not adversely affect the health and safety of persons on the facility'.

Regulation 2.9 of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Safety) Regulations 2009 also states that:

'The safety case for a facility must describe the means by which the operator will ensure that each member of the workforce at the facility has the necessary skills, training and ability:

(a) to undertake routine and non-routine tasks that might be given to him or her'.

These requirements apply to every member of the workforce on the facility, including crane drivers.

In other words, it is ultimately the responsibility **of the operator of the facility** to ensure that a crane driver is competent to drive a crane on an offshore facility and operate it in a safe manner.

3.1 Offshore crane driver competency system

To meet the requirements outlined above, the operator of the facility should develop and implement an offshore crane driver competency system which defines:

- competency (knowledge, skills and experience) requirements
- training needs
- competency assessment processes
- re-training and competency re-assessment requirements
- retention and maintenance of training records
- ongoing monitoring and regular review and improvement of the offshore crane driver competency system
- people responsible for the offshore crane driver competency system.

The competency system should take into account the availability and practicality of nationally recognised units of competence. Training.gov.au (TGA) is the official national register of information on training packages, qualifications, courses, units of competence and registered training organisations.

In 2008, a unit of competence (PMASUP305A Operate Offshore Cranes) for offshore lifting operations was endorsed by TGA.

This unit of competence was developed by an offshore oil and gas industry working group, which included a number of current offshore crane drivers. To gain recognition for a national unit of competence, the assessment needs to be performed by a registered training organisation (RTO). It should be noted that administration of RTOs is managed by TGA; NOPSEMA does not have any involvement with appointment or recognition of RTOs.

Some facility operators may consider making allowances in their systems for crane driver assessors or crane drivers holding certificates from other jurisdictions.

It must be stressed, however, that since the operator of the facility is responsible for the crane driver competence, such allowances should complement the operator's system and should not be used or seen as being used as an attempt to transfer the operator's responsibility to others.

Example

A person holding a crane driver certificate for a land-based crane issued in Australia under the national certification system may require additional offshore-specific training and competency assessment before being allowed to operate a crane on an offshore facility. It is up to the operator of the facility to determine on a case-by-case basis, under their offshore crane driver competency system, what additional training and competency assessment the person would require.

4 Notes

For enquiries concerning the certification of crane drivers for the offshore petroleum industry in Commonwealth and designated coastal waters of Victoria contact the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA):

- Telephone: +61 (0)8 6188- 8700, or
- e-mail: information@nopsema.gov.au