



Pilot-co-Pilot Safety Partnership-A new Way of Working for Crane Operators and Riggers

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Overview

The Industry Business Roundtable’s (IBR) Crane & Rigging (C&R) Committee, composed of SMEs from owners and contractors, collaborated to develop this “Best Practice” to provide guidance for Operators, Riggers, and their companies to understand the Pilot/Co-Pilot philosophy as it relates to safe operation. The challenge that owners and contractors have is to ensure the safety of their employees and equipment while maintaining a productive work environment.

The purpose of the Industry Business Roundtable is to educate participating companies so that every company represented will be better informed and can make their own decisions. IBR members are not required to adopt the IBR best practice recommendations but are asked to review them and apply those that will benefit their workforce where applicable.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this initiative is to establish a collaborative relationship between mobile crane operators and riggers that mirrors the coordinated partnership between pilots and co-pilots. By making a step change in the perception of who has the most control and responsibilities of safe task execution during crane setup, teardown, and travel activities, this effort seeks to instill a culture of mutual respect and shared accountability, emphasizing that riggers hold the primary responsibility for safe crane operations during these critical phases. Through effective communication, teamwork, and training, we aim to build an environment where both crane operators and riggers work seamlessly together, ensuring operational



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Overview

excellence and heightened safety standards.

2.0 Applicability

- 2.1 This practice applies to all sites that perform crane setup, teardown, and travel activities.
- 2.2 Local, state, or federal regulations precede an activity also covered by the Pilot/Co-Pilot partnership guidance document.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 Pilot – Crane Operator
- 3.2 Co-Pilot – Rigger

4.0 Objectives

- 4.1 Rebalance control perceptions: position riggers as primary safety champions (**pilots**) during safe setup,



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teardown, and travel activities.

- 4.2 Define which role serves as pilot and co-pilot for certain defined activities.
- 4.3 Foster mutual respect and trust through structured collaboration and teamwork.
- 4.4 Reinforce safe behaviors with tangible rewards and recognition.
- 4.5 Embed continuous coaching and peer-to-peer feedback into interactions where needed.
- 4.6 Greatly increase knowledge of workforce, both riggers and crane operators.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Crane Operator (Pilot)

5.1.a Controls and maneuvers the crane during crane setup, teardown, and travel activities.

5.1.b Relies on the rigger’s (Co-Pilot) signals to execute safely during crane When:

- The point of operation, meaning the load travel or the area near or at load placement, is not in full view of the operator.
- When the equipment is traveling, the view in the direction of travel is obstructed
- Due to site specific safety concerns, either the operator or the person handling the load determines that it is necessary.

Receive pilots signals.

5.1.c Confirm pilots provided signals.

5.1.d Initiate control inputs to perform maneuvers of received signals.

5.1.e Observe and coach PC-P interactions.

5.1.f Engage in fostering PC-P relationship.

5.2 Rigger (Co-Pilot)

5.2.a Provides clear hand signals or radio communication to guide the operator (Pilot).

5.2.b Reviews and comply with manufacturers recommendations, operations manual, and checklist during setup, teardown, and travel activities as second set of eyes to ensure crane doesn’t contact obstructions and operator (pilot) does not overlook any steps in the process.

5.2.c Lead hazard assessments prior to setup, teardown, and travel

5.2.d Direct safe setup, teardown, and travel activities.

5.2.e Deliver signals to execute activities.

5.2.f Confirm pilots provided signals are understood.

5.2.g Observe and coach PC-P interactions.

5.2.h Engage in fostering PC-P relationship.

5.3 Crane ownership

5.3.1. During travel requiring signals, the crane should always be under the ownership of either the crane operator (Pilot) or the qualified rigger/signal person (Co-Pilot).

5.3.2. Ownership of the crane should be transferred by positive 3-way verbal communication.



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6.0 Effective Communication and Coordination

6.1 Pre- Activity Meeting

- 6.1.a Review manufacturers recommendations, operations manual, and checklist associated with setup, teardown, and travel activities.
- 6.1.b Review starting location, travel path, and ending location for obstructions/hazards/or risk.
- 6.1.c Review setup, teardown, and travel areas for blind turns and powerlines.

6.2 Standardized Hand Signals & Radio Use

6.3. Trust & Situational Awareness

6.4 Emergency Protocols

7.0 Training

6.1

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