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US Department of Labor's OSHA publishes final rule on cranes and derricks in construction

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration today announced that it is issuing a new rule addressing the use of cranes and derricks in construction, which will replace a decades-old standard. Approximately 267,000 construction, crane rental and crane certification establishments employing about 4.8 million workers will be affected by the rule published today.

"The significant number of fatalities associated with the use of cranes in construction led the Labor Department to undertake this rulemaking," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "After years of extensive research, consultation and negotiation with industry experts, this long overdue rule will address the leading causes of fatalities related to cranes and derricks, including electrocution, boom collapse and overturning."

The previous rule, which dated back to 1971, was based on 40-year-old standards. Stakeholders from the construction industry recognized the need to update the safety requirements, methods and practices for cranes and derricks, and to incorporate technological advances in order to provide improved protection for those who work on and around cranes and derricks.

"The rule addresses critically important provisions for crane operator certification, and crane inspection, set-up and disassembly," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels. "Compliance with the rule will prevent needless worker injuries and death, and provide protection for the public and property owners."

The new rule is designed to prevent the leading causes of fatalities, including electrocution, crushed-by/struck-by hazards during assembly/disassembly, collapse and overturn. It also sets requirements for ground conditions and crane operator assessment. In addition, the rule addresses tower crane hazards, addresses the use of synthetic slings for assembly/disassembly work, and clarifies the scope of the regulation by providing both a functional description and a list of examples for the equipment that is covered.

In 2003, the secretary of labor appointed 23 experienced Cranes and Derricks Advisory Committee members representing manufacturers and trade associations, who met 11 times until a consensus on the regulatory text was reached in July 2004. The proposed rule was published Oct. 9, 2008, and the public was invited to submit comments until Jan. 22, 2009. Public hearings were held in March 2009, and the public comment period on those proceedings closed in June 2009. OSHA staff incorporated input from the public comments and testimony to develop the final regulatory text.

The complete rule is available at http://www.osha.gov/FedReg_osha_pdf/FED20100809.pdf. The regulation text is available at <http://www.osha.gov/cranes-derricks/index.html>. The new rule will take effect on Nov. 8, 2010.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.