OSHA rethinks capacity rule, delays crane certification

US regulator OSHA has announced it will delay implementation of the operator certification requirement of its federal cranes and derricks rule by three years, from 2014 to 2017, following widespread condemnation of an interpretation of the rule that would require operators to be certified based on crane capacity.

OSHA announced the plan for a delay on May 22. As well as delaying implementation of the certification requirement to November 10, 2017, the agency said it is considering a separate rulemaking to address concerns over the certification requirement.

Rob Weiss, vice president of New York hirer Cranes Inc and a member of the Cranes and Derricks Advisory Committee (C-DAC) that helped develop the standard through a negotiated rulemaking, condemned the delay: "Delay in the implementation of an operator certification requirement is troubling and does nothing to advance safety. Way back in 2003, C-DAC determined that certification was necessary in order to raise the level of operator competency in America. The lengthy bureaucratic process of approval assured that the new standard was delayed for six years before being published as a rule.

"The crux of the issue is that the standard has a requirement that operators be certified based on the type and capacity of the crane they will operate. We never believed that capacity had any relevance in judging the skills of an operator, despite what was written.

"When we drafted the rule, the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) was the only accredited and OSHA-recognized certification body for crane operators in the US, and, as such, we carefully studied their testing scheme. NCCCO certified operators on the basis of crane type, with the sole exception of telescopic boom cranes below 17.5 tons. Crane capacity was meaningless; it simply represented the break point between fixed cab and swing cab machines. However, to ensure that C-DAC was in sync with NCCCO’s tests, we included the word capacity.

"Letting this issue delay the certification process was not necessary. Frankly, the crane industry does not support certification by capacity, nor does it see any safety benefit in testing by capacity. I can only hope that OSHA uses this delay to correct an inadvertent error in its rule."

Graham Brent, executive director of the NCCCO, took a more conciliatory approach to the decision, saying, "The most important part I believe is not the fact that OSHA will propose to extend the compliance date, but why this additional time would be needed. A separate rulemaking could take a while, it could run right into the current deadline.

"Although this time extension will be viewed by many as a further "delay" and will not be popular, I believe, in the industry, the announcement taken as a whole is really a vindication of the industry's efforts over the past year to get OSHA to understand that there are some serious flaws in the way it was planning to interpret key provisions of para. 1427, i.e. the "certification by capacity" and the "certification = qualification" issues. So, to that extent, we would view this news positively."

TNT acquires TSD and Greenery, promotes Lunsford to President

Crane rental company TNT Crane & Rigging (TNT) has completed its purchase of TSD Crane & Rigging (TSD) and Greenery Construction & Maintenance. The firm also announced that it had promoted former executive vice president Kregg Lunsford to president.

With the acquisition of the two companies, TNT said that it had extended its footprint into the Permian, Panhandle and Kansas regions, with new branches in Odessa and Canadian, Texas.

Manitex moves into high capacity truck cranes

Manitex has launched its highest capacity to date, the TC700. The company said that the new machine signalled its entry into the higher capacity global truck crane market, claiming that it could offer a lower cost product on a standard truck chassis.

The business said that it had initial orders for the TC700 from several dealers and was expected to deliver them in the second half of 2013. The unit was revealed on 6 May 2013 at Manitex's 25th Anniversary Dealer Appreciation Event at its headquarters in Georgetown, Texas.

Paul Gibson, general manager for the company's Manitex Inc. crane subsidiary said, "The TC700 allows the final customer to select a commercial chassis, and ultimately offers very attractive economics to the dealer. Developed collaboratively with our launch customers, the Manitex TC700 is targeted to address specific applications as well as the continuing general demand for higher capacity cranes, and with a global market estimate of 1,500 units per year, we see an opportunity here for a highly successful new product launch."

Ainscough invests £11.4m for energy

Ainscough Crane Hire is embarking on an £11.4m crane investment programme as part of a major fleet expansion. This includes the addition of the UK's first resident 750t Liebherr LTM 3750-9.1 to its Heavy Cranes Division.

Another four new cranes will be added to the fleet this year, with the company having already taken delivery of a 500t crane in January. Two more cranes are expected before the end of 2013, an additional Liebherr LTM 1750-9.1 as well as a second 500t unit.

Ainscough said that the investment in its fleet was to keep up with demand from the energy sector, in which the construction and maintenance of oil refineries and wind farms formed a large part of the firm's workload.

FibreMax scores investment for unique synthetic ropes

Synthetic cable manufacturer FibreMax has sold a 25% stake to private equity firm NPM Capital. The manufacturer, which is based in the Netherlands said that it was planning to use the capital injected by its new shareholder, to establish a sales organisation to market the cables to the mining, offshore, building, construction, heavy transport industries and for those carrying out heavy industrial applications.

FibreMax specialises in synthetic cables made using what the company describes as a unique production process. According to the manufacturer its cables are lighter, stronger, more durable and more sustainable than traditional steel ones. The business was set