



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

CRANE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

CHECKLIST: NINE MONTHS OUT

What do you need to start thinking about and doing nine months in advance of the Crane Operator Training rule coming into effect?

Block out and schedule time for the training and tests

Winter months may coincide with the fewest installations or service calls. Take advantage of the inclement weather to complete 3-5 days of employee training and testing with the least impact on your business operations.

- Determine the number of employees you need to get trained and certified
- Research the available companies that offer training at [sites near you](#), [by date](#) or [online](#) (select National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO)).
- Schedule any [Specialty Exams](#) that are required for your employees
- Reach out to other sign companies in your area, and see if they have staff that need to get certified as well. See if you can have a trainer come to you to do a group training for a group discount. Your company may see significant savings with a local training if you can avoid paying lodging or overtime for travel.

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

What every sign company needs to know about the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) crane operator certification requirement.

What is the Crane Operator Certification rule?

The purpose of the rule is to improve worker safety by requiring operators to pass OSHA-approved proficiency exams (Written and Practical) to obtain a certification. The certification addresses the four main causes of worker accidents: electrocution; being crushed by the equipment; struck by the equipment or a load; and falls. Training prepares operators to recognize the principal hazards associated with crane use. You can read the full [OSHA requirements here](#).



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

When do my operators need to be certified by?

The current rule requires certification of crane operators by November 10, 2017.

The deadline was originally set for 2014, then was pushed back to 2017. Could this certification requirement be delayed again or revoked?

There is no indication that this requirement will change again. The implementation delay was in response to a widely known and understood problem: OSHA discovered that many accredited testing organizations issued certifications only by "type" of crane, rather than offering different certifications by "type and capacity" of crane, as the standard required. All stakeholders (OSHA, testing organizations, employers, unions, etc.) recognized the issue and agreed with the delay. There is not a similar set of circumstances with the current text of the rule. In order to delay the rule, the Administration would need to intervene. But that is unlikely, since many tens of thousands of crane operators have been trained and large companies (electric utilities, telecommunications, construction companies) have invested millions of dollars to certify their operators. Any further delay would devalue that investment (since the certification has a five-year window).

How will it impact my sign business?

- **Fees:** The operator must pass a Written exam (the Core Examination plus one or more Specialty Examinations) and the Practical test to prove they understand and are compliant with OSHA's requirements. OSHA requires that companies pay for certification of employees. Current testing fees are around \$200 per person (varying with online or in-person options) for the Written exam and \$60 for the Practical exam. Retest fees are the same as for first-time tests. For recertification (after 5 years), the Written exam is expected to cost around \$175. A complete list of NCCCO fees are published here (<http://nccco.org/nccco/get-cco-certified/cco-exam-fees>). Additional fees may apply for late registrations, rescheduling, returned checks, etc.
- **Time:** The Written exam is divided into a Core Examination and one more (up to four) Specialty Examinations. Candidates are allowed 90 minutes to complete the Core Examinations and 60 minutes to complete each Specialty Examination. Allow for a half-day window for the practical exam: 15 minutes for the actual exam per test candidate, plus additional time for hands-on training and pre-test inspections. Note: All candidates taking the practical exam at that site may be using the same crane.
- **Insurance:** As certification is designed to reduce injuries, it is possible you can save money on your Workers' Compensation insurance. Contact your insurance provider to find out specifically how this may affect your premiums.
- **Contractual requirements:** As the deadline approaches, verified certification may be required by clients, property owners or as part of the municipal permitting process.



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

Who in my shop needs to get certified?

Only the crane operator must be certified. The rigger and signal person must be “qualified” for the position, but are not required to be certified. This includes knowledge of the unit’s operating controls, where to locate safety manuals and how to prevent contact with power lines. **If a business uses more than one crane operator, they each must be certified.**

What if my crane operator(s) don’t get training?

- Passing the certification isn’t likely without preparation. Taking a training/test-prep course (usually lasting 3-4 days) immediately before sitting for the exam greatly increases the exam passage rate. Hundreds of training providers offer 2-4 day test prep courses, followed by the NCCCO exam. While more time and cost intensive up front, training may ensure a better and faster certification.
- NCCCO has a small listing of online/internet training providers (<http://nccco.org/nccco/training-resources/training-providers/online-training>). They provide up to 12-16 hours of self-directed training, ranging in cost from a few hundred to several hundred dollars. In contrast to the small number of online training providers, NCCCO has a listing of hundreds of training centers for classroom training.
- Note: **If you fail the test, you do not have an option to retake the certification exam immediately.** NCCCO requires advance notice of at least four (4) days before sitting for the written exam with a \$50 late fee for registration within two weeks of test date. Test results are mailed to candidates approximately 12 business days after the examination administration or 72 hours for computer-based exam locations.

What if my crane operator(s) don’t get certified?

In August 2016, OSHA fines increased dramatically. The maximum penalty for a serious violation increased to \$12,471. The ceiling for willful and repeat violations also rose to \$124,709. ISA recommends member companies obtain certification and comply with the OSHA requirements so your business will not lose time waiting for its certification, potentially delaying client installations.

Why should I do it now?

Planning ahead will enable your business to get the certifications needed at the lowest cost and with the smallest disruption to the staff and workflow of your company. Certification, when done correctly, has been shown to reduce accidents, save lives and reduce injuries. The certification provides employers with a sound basis on which to base their assessment of crane operator competency. All mobile crane operators must be certified by November 10, 2017.

I only fabricate signs. I don’t install signs. Does this affect my business at all?

The certification exams are designed for operators who are trained and currently work in crane operation. The certification is required for any piece of equipment having a maximum (rated) capacity greater than 2,000 lbs., even if the equipment only moves loads weighing less than 2,000lbs, and for any piece of equipment used to hoist, lower or horizontally move a load. For the sign, graphics and visual communications industry specifically, this is most likely a boom truck, mobile truck crane or articulating crane. Power shovels, excavators and backhoes are specifically excluded.

CHECK BACK FOR UPDATES AT SIGNS.ORG/CRANE