



Crane Repair and Maintenance

Always consider manufacturer guidelines and preventative maintenance

BY ELIZABETH COLLINS

The most important aspect of crane service work is not necessarily who performs it, but how it is performed. Whether the work is done by a third party repair facility or by a dealership, it has to follow the manufacturer's guidelines and meet manufacturer's standards.

"All cranes should be maintained to manufacturers standards, that's the bible," said George Wancata, owner, Crane Certification Services Incorporated, Broadview Heights, Ohio.

Much of the service work performed on cranes is maintenance. However, post-accident repairs are also common, and they require much more communication with the manufacturer.

Tacho Gamino is the service manager at Walter Payton Power Equipment, LLC, a Manitowoc and Grove dealership in Tinley Park, Ill. According to Gamino, when they perform post accident repairs they need to use repair procedures from the manufacturer. "There is certain criteria that you need to get permission from manufacturer, or it needs to be replaced," he explained.

Dick Carrington, product support manger, Hayden-Murphy Equipment Company, Minneapolis, Minn., agreed that the most important part of an accident repair is obtaining the correct procedures from the manufacturer.

"We usually take pictures and send them to the manufacturer and take measurements if the repair is part of the boom, and get their recommendations," said Carrington. "There is quite more involved in an accident repair than just normal maintenance."

Third party repair facilities also have to follow OEM guidelines when making repairs. According to Tom Barth, owner, Barth Crane Inspections, Goose Creek, SC, the manufacturer always needs to be included. "If you have a crane accident, and you have it repaired by 'xyz', what you've automatically done is leave the manufacturer out of the picture. What you want to do is contact the crane manufacturer and get their blessings on the repair."

Wheco is a third party company that specializes in



A before and after shot of a Wheco restored crane.

engineered structural repairs. They perform post accident, structural repair and restoration, as well as boom repair. They have locations in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland, Ore.

"We're very specialized, and we go to great lengths not to compete with manufacturers and distributors," said Jay Shiffler, Wheco's vice president, business development. According to Shiffler, Wheco likes to replace everything with original parts, which they sometimes buy directly from the manufacturer or the distributor. Because they have a full hydraulics shop and machine shop, they can reverse engineer and fabricate pieces of components.

"We don't repair damaged parts and sell them. We do work for our customers, not compete with them," explained Shiffler.

Preventative Maintenance

Preventative maintenance is one of the greatest deterrents to accidents. Manufacturers are doing great things to emphasize preventative maintenance programs, and operator training. Because operators are tremendously important in that process, many industry professionals consider operator training and capabilities as significant to the preventative maintenance program.

"OSHA requires that you have a preventative maintenance program for your crane," said Jimmy Hayes, senior safety consultant, North American Crane Bureau. As an inspector, Hayes has seen problems that were not caused by normal wear and tear.

"Most of the deficiencies are from misuse or abuse of equipment, or improper use of maintenance," said Hayes.

"Therefore, operators need to be taught proper operations to reduce amount of maintenance."

Insurance

After any accident, the relationship between the insurance carrier and the repair facility is further established. Both dealerships and third party companies provided insurance carriers with estimates, allowing them to decide their next move.

Wheco is considered a repair vs. replace facility and conduct most of their business with insurance companies.

"We've done a lot of work selling ourselves to insurance companies, we're preferred vendors," said Shiffler. "They'll hire us to give a proposal on a job."

It is not only important that the customer has adequate insurance, but that the repair service does as well. Liability insurance is carried by repair facilities to protect themselves, especially when dealing with an accident repair.

"Once you do a repair job you are never out of that link in the liability chain," said Shiffler. "You have to be prepared with the documentation of all of the work you've done on the crane."

Certified and Credible

Following an accident, all cranes have to be inspected to ensure that they meet the necessary standards for safe operation. Therefore, the mechanic who is performing the repairs needs to be qualified and knowledgeable. So, what makes a

mechanic and the company credible?

Dealership mechanics are educated by the specific manufacturer they represent.

"Our mechanics are factory trained. They go to school at least twice a year and are current on new technology that is used in the equipment," said Gamino.

Certain job sites, such as chemical plants and nuclear plants, require repairs be performed by a certified mechanic. Walter Payton Power Equipment, LLC currently has one certified mechanic and is in the process of certifying another.

Hayden-Murphy Equipment Company has eight field service mechanics and five shop mechanics, educated by Manitowoc and Grove.

"We take pride in sending our people to a lot of school," said Carrington. Although one class can run into the thousands of dollars, plus the cost of losing a mechanic for the week, Carrington says it is necessary to stay competitive.

Wheco also stands behind their mechanic's work by offering warranties that often exceed commercial standards and original manufacturer's warranties, as well as providing work that is guaranteed and certifiable

"Everything we do meets or exceeds OSHA, CAL OSHA, ANSI standards, and American Welding Standards," explained Shiffler.

Gamino also recommended checking the qualifications of the mechanic and the availability of parts when looking for repair services. **GW**