

**WAC 296-155-53300 Operator qualifications and certification.**

(1) Prior to operating any crane/equipment covered under chapter 296-155 WAC, Part L, with the exception of the operator-in-training requirements outlined in subsection (2) of this section and those cranes/equipment exempt in WAC 296-155-52900(3), the employer must ensure that the operator meets the following requirements:

(a) Has been trained and evaluated in accordance with subsection (3) of this section, and has a valid crane/equipment operator certificate, for the type of crane/equipment to be operated, issued by a crane/equipment operator testing organization which has an accredited program, accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

For a testing organization to be considered accredited to certify operators under this part, it must:

(i) Be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency based on that agency's determination that industry recognized criteria for written testing materials, practical examinations, test administration, grading, facilities/equipment, and personnel have been met;

(ii) Administer written and practical tests that:

(A) Assess the operator applicant regarding, at a minimum, the knowledge and skills listed in (b) and (c) of this subsection; and

(B) Provide different levels of certification based on equipment type, or capacity and type.

(iii) Have procedures for operators to reapply and be retested in the event an operator applicant fails a test or is decertified;

(iv) Provide certification based on equipment type, or type and capacity;

(v) Have testing procedures for recertification designed to ensure that the operator continues to meet the technical knowledge and skills requirements in (b) and (c) of this subsection; and

(vi) Have its accreditation reviewed by a nationally recognized accrediting agency at least every three years.

(b) A determination through a written test that:

(i) The individual knows the information necessary for safe operation of the specific type of crane/equipment the individual will operate, including all of the following:

(A) The controls and operational/performance characteristics;

(B) Use of, and the ability to calculate (manually or with a calculator), load/capacity information on a variety of configurations of the crane/equipment;

(C) Procedures for preventing and responding to power line contact;

(D) Technical knowledge similar to the subject matter criteria listed in WAC 296-155-56420 of this part applicable to the specific type of crane/equipment the individual will operate. Use of WAC 296-155-56420 criteria meets the requirements of this provision;

(E) Technical knowledge applicable to:

(I) The suitability of the supporting ground and surface to handle expected loads;

(II) Site hazards; and

(III) Site access.

(F) This part, including applicable incorporated materials.

(ii) The individual is able to read and locate relevant information in the equipment manual and other materials containing information referred to in (i) of this subsection.

(iii) Language and literacy requirements. Tests under this section may be administered verbally, with answers given verbally, where the operator candidate:

(A) Passes a written demonstration of literacy relevant to the work; and

(B) Demonstrates the ability to use the type of written manufacturer procedures applicable to the class/type of equipment for which the candidate is seeking certification.

(iv) Tests under this section may be administered in any language the operator candidate understands, and the operator's certification documentation must note the language in which the test was given. The operator is only permitted to operate equipment that is furnished with materials required by this part, such as operations manuals and load charts, that are written in the language of the certification.

(c) A determination through a practical test that the individual has the skills necessary for safe operation of the crane/equipment, including the following:

(i) Ability to recognize, from visual and auditory observation, the items listed in WAC 296-155-53405(2);

(ii) Operational and maneuvering skills;

(iii) Application of load chart information; and

(iv) Application of safe shut-down and securing procedures.

**Notes:**

- An operator's certificate issued by the accredited testing agency is valid for a maximum of five years, and must be renewed to ensure operators maintain qualified operator status.
- For self-erecting tower cranes, the department will accept a tower crane certification issued by a nationally accrediting testing agency.
- For derricks, the department will accept a lattice boom truck or crawler mobile crane operator's certificate.

(d) If no accredited testing agency offers certification examinations for a particular type of equipment, an operator will be deemed to have complied with the certification requirements of this section for that equipment if the operator has been certified for the type that is most similar to that equipment by a nationally accredited testing agency. The operator's certificate must state the type of equipment for which the operator is certified.

(e) No cost to employees. Whenever operator certification/licensure or recertification is required under this section, the employer must provide the certification/licensure at no cost to employees.

(f) Provision of testing and training. A testing entity is permitted to provide training as well as testing services as long as the criteria of the accrediting agency for an organization providing both services are met.

(g) Has crane hours of experience as shown in Table 3; and

(h) Pass a substance abuse test conducted by a recognized laboratory. The level of testing will be determined by the standard practice for the industry where the operator is employed, and this test shall be confirmed by a recognized laboratory service.

**Exemption:**

When it is necessary in the performance of their duties, crane/equipment manufacturer representatives, factory representatives and maintenance personnel are not required to be certified crane operators.

**Crane Operator Experience for Cranes Used in the Construction Industry  
Table 3**

The 5 Categories of Cranes and Their Types	Number of Hours of Actual Crane Operating Experience	Number of Hours of Crane Related Experience
<b>(1) Mobile Cranes</b>		
(a) Lattice Boom Crawler Cranes	300 tons and above 1000 Hours	300 tons and above 1000 Hours
	Under 300 tons 500 Hours	Under 300 tons 500 Hours

<b>The 5 Categories of Cranes and Their Types</b>	<b>Number of Hours of Actual Crane Operating Experience</b>	<b>Number of Hours of Crane Related Experience</b>
(b) Lattice Boom Truck Cranes	300 tons and above 1000 Hours	300 tons and above 1000 Hours
	Under 300 tons 500 Hours	Under 300 tons 500 Hours
(c) Large Telescopic Boom Cranes (Swing Cab) (including digger derricks)	Over 130 tons 750 Hours	Over 130 tons 750 Hours
	Over 40 tons to 130 tons 250 Hours	Over 40 tons to 130 tons 250 Hours
	40 tons and under 40 Hours	40 tons and under 40 Hours
(d) Small Telescopic Boom Cranes (Fixed Cab) (including digger derricks)	15 tons and above 40 Hours	15 tons and above 40 Hours
	Over 5 tons and under 15 tons 20 Hours	Over 5 tons and under 15 tons 20 Hours
	5 tons and under 8 hours	5 tons and under 16 hours
<b>(2) Articulating Boom Cranes</b>	20 Hours	20 Hours
<b>(3) Tower Cranes</b>		
(a) Hammerhead	500 Hours	500 Hours
(b) Luffing	500 Hours	500 Hours
(c) Self-Erecting	50 Hours	50 Hours
<b>(4) Overhead/Bridge and Gantry Cranes</b>		
(a) Cab Operated	40 Hours	40 Hours
(b) Pendant/Remote	40 Hours	40 Hours
<b>(5) Derricks</b> (not including digger derricks)	20 Hours	500 Hours
<p><b>Hours of actual crane operating experience.</b> For all cranes: Time while the operator or operator-in-training is at the controls of the crane; or has direct control of that crane; or a combination of operating hours within the same crane type. For mobile cranes: It also includes time while installing/removing boom sections, luffing boom, jib, extending and retracting outriggers/stabilizers, leveling crane, and replacing hoisting rope. For tower cranes: It includes time while climbing (increasing or decreasing the height of the tower/mast).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Additional actual crane operator experience may account for crane related experience.</p>		
<p><b>Hours of crane related experience:</b> Time as a signal person, oiler, crane mechanic, crane certifier, formal classroom training, crane simulator operation, and a combination of operating hours on other categories of cranes.</p>		

**Note:** Cranes and other lifting machines covered under this part that are exempt can be found in WAC 296-155-52900(3).

(2) **Operator-in-training.** An employee who is not a qualified crane operator as outlined in subsection (1) of this section, shall only be permitted to operate the crane/equipment as a part of their training when the following requirements are met:

(a) Prior to operating the crane/equipment, the employer must provide each operator-in-training with sufficient training through a combination of formal and practical instruction, to ensure that the operator-in-training has developed the skills, knowledge, and ability to recognize and avert risk necessary to operate the crane/equipment safely for the assigned work, under limitations established by this section (including continuous supervision), and any additional limitations established by the employer.

(b) The tasks performed by the operator-in-training while operating the crane must be within the operator-in-training's ability, as determined by the monitoring qualified crane/equipment operator.

(c) While operating the crane/equipment, the operator-in-training must be continuously monitored by a qualified crane/equipment operator who meets all of the following requirements:

(i) The qualified crane/equipment operator is an employee or agent of the operator-in-training's employer; and

(ii) The qualified crane/equipment operator has the knowledge, training, and experience necessary to direct the operator-in-training on the crane/equipment in use.

(d) While monitoring the operator-in-training, the qualified crane/equipment operator performs no tasks that detract from the qualified crane/equipment operator's ability to monitor the operator-in-training.

(e) For cranes other than tower cranes: The qualified crane/equipment operator and the operator-in-training must be in direct line of sight of each other. In addition, they must communicate verbally or by hand signal.

(f) For tower cranes: The qualified crane operator and the operator-in-training must be in direct communication with each other.

(g) The employer may only assign tasks within the operator-in-training's ability. The operator-in-training must not operate the crane/equipment in any of the following circumstances:

(i) If any part of the crane/equipment, load line, or load (including rigging and lifting accessories), if operated up to the crane/equipment's maximum working radius in the work zone, could get within 20 feet of a power line that is up to 350 kV, or within 50 feet of a power line that is over 350 kV;

(ii) If the crane/equipment is used to hoist personnel;

(iii) In a multiple-crane/equipment or multiple load line lifts;

(iv) If the equipment is used over a shaft, cofferdam, or in a tank farm;

(v) Multi-tier rigging, as defined in WAC 296-155-52902, can only be accomplished by the operator-in-training when the qualified crane/equipment operator determines that the operator-in-training's skills are sufficient for this high-skill work; and

(vi) Critical lifts, as defined in WAC 296-155-52902, can only be accomplished by the operator-in-training when the qualified crane/equipment operator determines that the operator-in-training's skills are sufficient.

(h) Retraining. The employer must provide retraining in relevant topics for each operator-in-training when, based on the performance of the operator-in-training or an evaluation of the operator-in-training's knowledge, there is an indication that retraining is necessary.

(3) Evaluation.

(a) Through an evaluation, the employer must ensure that each operator is qualified by a demonstration of:

(i) The skills and knowledge, as well as the ability to recognize and avert risk, necessary to operate the equipment safely, including those specific to the safety devices, operational aids, software, and the size and configuration of the equipment. Size and configuration includes, but is not limited to: Lifting capacity; boom length; attachments; luffing jib; and counterweight set-up;

(ii) The ability to perform the hoisting activities required for assigned work, including, if applicable, on rubber hoisting, pick and carry work, assembly, disassembly, or reconfiguration work, blind lifts, personnel hoisting, and multi-crane/equipment lifts;

(iii) The ability to perform the duties as an A/D director, if the operator is expected to perform the duties of an A/D director; and

(iv) The evaluation shall be based on all of the information from the operator's manual. Any additional requirements/language interpretations must be in writing from the manufacturer, or if the manufacturer is no longer available, an RPE must be used.

(b) For operators employed prior to (insert the publication date of this new rule), the employer may rely on its previous documented evaluation of the operator, in lieu of conducting a new evaluation of that operator's existing knowledge and skills.

(c) The evaluation required under this subsection must be conducted by an individual who has the knowledge, training, and experience necessary to assess equipment operators.

(d) The evaluator must be an employee or agent of the employer. Employers that assign evaluations to an agent retain the duty to ensure that the requirements in this subsection are satisfied. Once the evaluation is completed successfully, the employer may allow the operator to operate other equipment that the employer can demonstrate does not require substantially different skills, knowledge, or ability to recognize and avert risk to operate.

(e) The employer must document the completion of the evaluation. This document must provide: The operator's name; the evaluator's name and signature; the date; and the make, model, and configuration of equipment used in the evaluation. The employer must make the document available at the job site while the operator is employed by the employer. For operators assessed per (b) of this subsection, the documentation must reflect the date of the employer's determination of the operator's abilities and the make, model, and configuration of equipment on which the operator has previously demonstrated competency.

(f) When an employer is required to provide an operator with retraining under (e) of this subsection, the employer must reevaluate the operator with respect to the subject of the retraining. The employer must also obtain documentation showing hours of crane operator experience and crane related experience separated out by crane type and capacity.

**Note:** A signed declaration from the crane operator attesting to actual hours of crane operator experience and crane related experience, separated out by crane type and capacity, is acceptable. For sample declaration form, see WAC 296-155-56425.

(4) Crane operator experience and crane related experience must be documented and separated out by crane type and capacity; this documentation need only show the minimum amount of hours as outlined in Table 3 above. If documenting crane operating or related crane experience hours, a copy of the hours must be provided to the operator as soon as practical, if requested.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060, and chapter 49.17 RCW. WSR 25-16-089, s 296-155-53300, filed 8/5/25, effective 9/5/25. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060. WSR 16-09-085, § 296-155-53300, filed 4/19/16, effective 5/20/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060 and chapter 49.17 RCW, and 29 C.F.R. 1926, Subpart CC. WSR 13-02-068, § 296-155-53300, filed 12/31/12, effective 2/1/13. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.440, 49.17.060, and 29 C.F.R. 1926, Subpart CC. WSR 12-01-086, § 296-155-53300, filed 12/20/11, effective 2/1/12. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060, and chapter 49.17 RCW. WSR 10-14-100, § 296-155-53300, filed 7/6/10, effective 9/1/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060, 49.17.400, 49.17.410, 49.17.420, 49.17.430, and 49.17.440. WSR 08-22-080, § 296-155-53300, filed 11/4/08, effective 1/1/10.]