



# Safety Alert

## MOBILE CRANES

issued by WorkCover NSW



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A mobile crane operator was injured in an accident in Sydney recently when the slewing superstructure of the crane he was operating became disengaged from its carrier. Although the slewing mechanism of the crane involved is unusual, the accident has raised general concerns over the maintenance of mobile cranes. WorkCover's Construction Industry Team is currently investigating the accident. Without commenting on this particular accident, this Alert is intended to advise persons in control of mobile cranes of their responsibilities for upkeep to ensure that they are safe to use.

### What should be done?

Persons in control of plant have obligations under occupational health and safety legislation to ensure the plant is safe and without risk to operators or others who may be affected by its operation. This extends to ensuring it is maintained in a condition that enables it to be operated safely. Mobile cranes should be operated and maintained in accordance with the designer's and manufacture's instructions, or where these are not available, those drawn up by a competent person.

The Australian Standards AS 2550.1 Cranes hoists and winches Part 1: General requirements specify particular requirements for their inspection and maintenance. This, in turn, specifies four principal levels of inspections to be observed. These are in ascending order of detail:

1. Pre-operational inspection, which should be carried out prior to using the mobile crane at each work shift.
2. Routine maintenance and inspection, which should be carried out at no more than three-monthly intervals.
3. Periodic inspection, which should be carried out annually.
4. Major inspection, which is required on cranes that have reached the end of their design life (or, where this is unknown, 25 years for the structure and 10 years for the mechanical components); cranes that are to be recommissioned and that do not have previous operating records or that were designed and built to unknown standards; and cranes that are to be upgraded or modified. The purpose of this inspection is to ensure that such cranes are suitable for continued safe operation.

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The crane operator should carry out the first of these inspections. The other inspections require a more detailed examination and include structural members and other critical components, which includes slewing mechanisms. These inspections should be undertaken by a suitably qualified person (i.e. a specialist mechanic), and the major inspection should be supervised by an appropriately qualified Engineer. The extent of the examination ranges from a visual inspection as part of a routine inspection, to non-destructive examination for periodic and major inspections, where it may be necessary to strip-down parts of the crane.

The AS 2550 series is referenced in the NSW Code of Practice Technical Guidance that supports the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 (the Regulation), and which is called up under Section 43 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000. This means that under NSW legislation, a person must abide by the requirements of the Standards unless procedures are implemented that provide an equivalent or better outcome.

**Note:** Although Technical Guidance refers to AS 2550.1:1993 and AS 2550.5: 1993 Mobile cranes, both these standards were revised in 2002 and this alert reflects the content of these editions.

Inspection and maintenance records are required to be kept under the provisions of the Regulation, and a WorkCover officer visiting a workplace where a mobile crane is being used may request evidence that it is being maintained in accordance with these provisions.

#### **Further information**

For further information and advice about this matter please contact the WorkCover Information Centre on 13 10 50.

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