

Health & Safety – Gantry Crane Operators

Introduction

Gantry cranes are used to lift and transport smaller items around a working area in a factory or machine shop. Some gantry cranes are equipped with an enclosed track, while others use an I-beam, or other extruded shapes, for the running surface. Most gantry cranes are intended to be stationary when loaded, and mobile when unloaded. Gantry Cranes can be outfitted with either a Wire Rope hoist or a lower capacity Chain Hoist.

A “Crane Operator” is defined in the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) relating to cranes as “a person who has acquired, through a combination of training, qualification or experience, the knowledge and skills to operate a particular type of crane”.

Employers and employees need to be aware that all cranes are different and may have specific operating, safety, inspection and maintenance requirements. It is essential that employers and employees have the manufacturers operating manuals and are familiar with their particular crane(s).

Operator Licensing

The ACOP draws attention to Section 13 of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, that “every employee must be adequately trained in the safe use of all plant, objects, substances, protective clothing and equipment that they are, or may be, required to use or handle”, the training being a responsibility of their employer. Furthermore that “employers should, therefore, be able to provide evidence that their crane operators have the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to safely operate their cranes”.

The minimum qualification requirement for all persons operating or working with a crane is that they must hold the applicable Unit Standard. The requirement for gantry crane operators is that they must have achieved (and thus hold) **unit standard 3800** - “Operate a pendant controlled overhead crane and lift and place loads”.

Training of operators and assessment of their knowledge and skills against unit standard 3800 is available from appropriately accredited training providers/Private Training Establishments.

Persons who have achieved unit standard 3800 are thus deemed able to demonstrate knowledge of company procedures and requirements for lifting practices for radio remote or pendant controlled overhead cranes, and the functions, care and use of the crane and equipment. They are also able to sling, lift, travel, and unload or place regular loads used in the workplace; and park the crane and store equipment.