

CRANE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION

A Model Renewal Program

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Skilled occupations, including crane operation, should be treated as professional vocations. This involves adopting codes of conduct, adhering to industry standards, demonstrating current technical proficiency and undergoing performance-based evaluations. This principle is being applied to the crane operator occupation to improve standardized safety practices, reinforce essential skills and ensure continued competency.
- The certification renewal program is intended to cultivate pride, belonging and recognition within the crane operator community by creating a distinction between currently certified operators and certified professional crane operators who complete certification renewal.
- Extensive stakeholder engagement revealed key marketing messages, appropriate renewal requirements and useful tools to promote adoption of certification renewal requirements.

TOWER CRANES, MOBILE CRANES AND BOOM TRUCKS are prevalent in almost every industry sector, but incidents involving these machines can result in fatalities. As a result, it is crucial that operators can perform the work safely (CBC News, 2008; WorkSafeBC, 2021).

To ensure competency, many locations worldwide implement crane operator certification programs. In the U.S., the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO, n.d.) requires written and practical exams, with certification valid for 5 years. In British Columbia, Canada, British Columbia Association for Crane Safety (BC Crane Safety) mandates a competency-based system involving theory tests, practical assessments and load chart exams, with recognition of select international credentials. Certification requirements vary across Canada; some provinces mandate trade certification, while others do not (Government of Canada, n.d.). Globally, standards differ—the European Crane Operators License offers voluntary European Union-wide certification, while Singapore and Indonesia provide national training. Offshore certifications often follow oil and gas protocols (API, n.d.; ECOL, n.d.; Singapore Ministry of Manpower, n.d.).

Like many professions, the crane industry has experienced rapid growth, changing technologies and new regulatory procedures. Historically, certification in British Columbia granted a lifetime license to operate without requiring ongoing competency verification. To address this gap, BC Crane Safety introduced a recertification program. This article outlines the history of crane operator certification in British Columbia, presents the rationale for implementing a recertification process, describes the challenges associated with establishing and adopting new standards, and discusses how stakeholder research findings are shaping the path forward.

A History of Crane Operator Certification

In province-wide public hearings held throughout 2004 and 2005, employers, city councils and other stakeholders recommended that crane operators be certified to ensure their competency in operating a crane. They proposed that certification be managed according to the regulations of the Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia (WorkSafeBC), the provincial occupational health and safety regulator. In response, BC Crane Safety was established in November 2005 as the provincial authority responsible for crane operator certification in British Columbia, with the mandate to develop and implement a certification plan for crane operators.

On July 1, 2007, WorkSafeBC began enforcing the new crane operator certification regulation and BC Crane Safety (2016) began issuing certifications for tower and mobile cranes and boom trucks. Certified crane operators achieve their status as qualified and competent through a formal process of examinations, including both written tests and field evaluations (BC Crane Safety, 2021a; Long, 2021; WorkSafeBC, 2021). This process measures and confirms that they possess the skill and knowledge needed to safely operate, inspect and maintain specific machinery (BC Crane Safety, 2021a; Long, 2021; WorkSafeBC, 2021). The certification is recognized and deemed acceptable by the provincial regulator under the occupational health and safety regulation. BC Crane Safety (2020a) serves as the designated authority responsible for establishing and maintaining industry-accepted standards and has certified approximately 24,000 crane

operators to operate tower cranes, mobile cranes and boom trucks across British Columbia.

Need For Recertification

Recertification was initially planned during the implementation of the certification process; however, concerns from industry stakeholders and WorkSafeBC led to the postponement of a recertification system. These concerns included liability issues, potential resistance from stakeholders and uncertainty over how best to assess ongoing competency. Over time, the absence of a structured recertification system has raised questions about maintaining industry standards and ensuring long-term safety.

In March 2024, WorkSafeBC convened industry and labor stakeholders, including crane employers, unions and safety organizations, to address a surge in crane-related incidents in Metro Vancouver, including a fatal incident at the Oakridge Park site. Their investigation into four recent incidents identified seven key crane safety risks in early 2025, including structural collapse, operator and supervisor competency, equipment certification, crane contact hazards, exclusion zones and inadequate rigging training. Action to address these risks began in earnest, including the issuing of a rigging safety bulletin that called for formal training and competency standards (WorkSafeBC, 2025).

In addition, BC Crane Safety prioritized addressing the operator competency risk factor. While Long (2021) argued that the most compelling reason for certification and credentialing is to ensure a qualified and competent workforce, the Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia (WorkSafeBC, 2018) identified several potentially deadly crane load failures involving certified crane operators. As a result, the industry began to explore the possibility of transitioning from a lifetime certification program to one that ensures that crane operators maintain their competency throughout their careers.

Even with a stringent initial certification process, a lifetime certification cannot account for evolving industry practices, technological advancements and regulatory changes. For example, crane operators are increasingly required to interpret electronic data located in the crane cab, such as load moment indicators, anemometers and electronic scales, as well as equipment controls involving computerized applications. As a result, operators must stay current on technological developments (Red Seal Program, 2018; Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trade Certification Commission, 2021). Additionally, regulatory changes and workplace incidents impact safe work practices such as tower crane assembly and dismantling.

Historically, WorkSafeBC (2018) addressed this problem by setting the expectation that employers are responsible for ensuring that their operators receive instruction and can demonstrate competency on the specific crane they will operate before doing so. In addition to requiring employers to conduct ongoing assessments to identify gaps in an operator's knowledge, WorkSafeBC prevention officers conduct worksite inspections and ask either the employer or operator to verify how an operator is qualified and has demonstrated competency (WorkSafeBC, 2018). However, this employer-centric approach has not provided a standardized method for maintaining safety standards across the industry. Therefore, the implementation of a crane operator certification renewal program is a natural progression to assess ongoing qualifications and ensure the competency of crane operator professionals.

Leveraging Certification Renewal Principles

Before pursuing crane certification renewal, BC Crane Safety researched the current best practices. Marom (2017) argued that certification renewal is a multilayered process requiring shared criteria, transparency and accountability among all key players. Stakeholders in the crane certification renewal program include crane operators, employers, hiring managers, human resources professionals, training organizations, regulatory bodies and the public (McCorkle, 2015). BC Crane Safety made efforts to determine how each critical stakeholder group relates to certification decisions and how they assess the value of certification and certification renewal. These efforts culminated in in-depth interviews with certified crane operators. The insights from this research are explored further in the “Research Findings” section (p. 25).

On a deeper level, certification renewal necessitates competency maintenance; therefore, a system for competency evaluation is required. Currently, BC Crane Safety (2022b) uses a summative evaluation system focusing on the successful completion of a written examination and field evaluation. Implementation of a formative assessment system, conducted as a crane operator develops skills and expected to continue throughout their career, would provide additional support to crane operator trainees, facilitate regular checks with certified operators, and ensure additional oversight of the operators’ continuing attainment of competencies and knowledge growth (BC Crane Safety, 2021a), thereby supporting critical competencies for certified operators (see Figure 1).

Another element of certification renewal is the demonstration of lifelong learning, with a framework for continuous professional development across their careers and a demonstration of their belief in and commitment to improving their knowledge and skills (Nora et al., 2016). Nora et al. discuss the emergence of recertification in 1976. Then, 60 years after the American Board of Ophthalmology founded its professional certification, they identified a need for a recertification program that incorporated formative and summative elements. Recertification would involve a combination of time, participation

and performance metrics to define expert and master components within a milestone framework. BC Crane Safety (2021a) currently employs the metric of seat time in the initial crane operator certification, which is a key component for crane operators seeking to renew their certification.

A certification renewal program must also consider the timeframe in which competency is evaluated. Currently, crane operator certification in British Columbia follows a single cycle of summative evaluation for credentialing. However, when the goal is to maintain qualifications and promote continuous education due to changing technology and work practices, the organization should consider employing an alternative evaluation system. Giron et al. (2021) describe a longitudinal assessment strategy that employs technology to administer shorter assessments of specific content with immediate feedback repeatedly over a defined period. Longitudinal assessment is based on adult learning principles that promote learning, retention and transfer of knowledge to the occupational setting.

BC Crane Safety will incorporate a longitudinal assessment strategy by implementing formative and periodic summative evaluations. Continuous education and lifelong learning will become more commonplace as crane operators will need to regularly demonstrate the maintenance of competencies, regulatory awareness and adherence to a code of conduct, ensuring that crane certification maintains its value for all stakeholders. Figure 1 illustrates the process as currently imagined by BC Crane Safety.

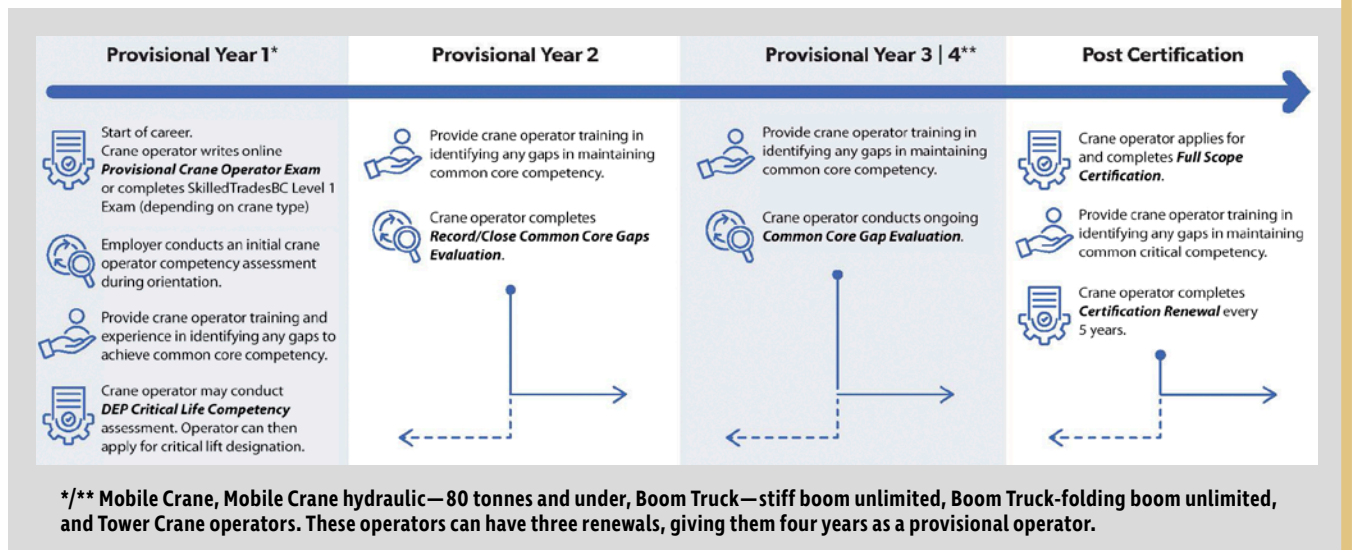
Implementation Challenges

Once BC Crane Safety, its board of directors and WorkSafeBC aligned on the goal of implementing a certification renewal program, they recognized two main challenges that needed to be addressed: identifying which standards should be used and inspiring adoption by crane operators.

Identifying the Standards

Certification renewal ensures that crane operators remain competent to perform their work despite changes in

FIGURE 1
CRANE OPERATOR COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT SYSTEM



equipment, technology or regulations. As such, preliminary conversations and best practices research led BC Crane Safety to identify four key components of crane certification renewal. The first component asks crane operators to abide by a code of conduct that clearly outlines the minimum professional responsibilities of a crane operator. The second component uses the number of seat hours to ensure that crane operators have recent experience in the field. The third component asks crane operators to complete online training hours to stay up to date with industry and regulatory changes. The fourth component requires that crane operators perform work in front of a qualified evaluator.

Inspiring Adoption by Crane Operators

Historically, crane certification in British Columbia has been seen as a lifelong accreditation. Resistance from crane operators as they grapple with additional requirements is expected, especially if the value proposition of certification renewal is unclear. In early discussions with current certified operators, they perceived the certification renewal process as a “cash grab” and complained that it would involve additional operational time to demonstrate competency. BC Crane Safety has been cognizant of and sensitive to these issues and aims to address the challenges in its design of certification renewal.

Enlisting crane operators as willing participants is critical to ensuring the success of certification renewal and raising the professional capacity of the industry. To accomplish this, crane operators must be convinced of the benefits of recertification through thoughtful messaging. Burns (2016, p. 130) explains:

Marketing moves people forward. It's a spur to action that takes people from where they are to somewhere better. Marketing goes beyond simply informing. It's the next stage of communication. Marketing makes a compelling case for why employees should choose to take a new action for safety.

A successful marketing approach would require a deep understanding of the thoughts and feelings of those impacted by these changes.

Research Interviews

Given the anticipated resistance from currently certified crane operators, BC Crane Safety sought to understand what these operators knew about certification renewal, how they felt about specific elements of the proposed standards, and how to best position and market the upcoming changes. The organization enlisted the support of Habit Mastery Consulting to conduct 30- to 45-minute in-depth interviews. Interview participants were either current or former crane operators. Those interview subjects who were former crane operators remained connected to the industry as instructors, business owners or supervisors, ranging from small to large employers and working in settings from large metropolitan areas to small towns or regions throughout the province. The interview questions and a summary of responses for each question can be found in Figure 2 (p. 26).

Research Findings

To gather more information, 19 interviews were conducted with crane operators and industry professionals. These interviews explored participants' perceptions of certification renewal, industry challenges and marketing strategies. The interviews revealed a lack of cohesion among crane operators.

Their attitudes, perceptions and understanding of certification renewal are entrenched in strong, deep-seated cultures and subcultures. For example, crane operators who went through apprenticeship programs were protective of their initial training and distrustful of the relevance and value of certification renewal.

There was almost universal agreement from both managers and crane operators that employers bear greater responsibility for ensuring crane operator competency, with a push for employer-driven competency assessments where employers verify and track operator skills. The key findings important to BC Crane Safety's understanding of its audience and the certification renewal program are reported in the following sections.

General Sentiment on Certification Renewal

The overall response to certification renewal was lukewarm. While operators support safety initiatives, many are skeptical about the effectiveness of certification renewal. There was no strong opposition, although some expressed concerns about bureaucracy, redundancy and feasibility. The industry is perceived as self-regulating, with operators believing that underperformers naturally exit the field. The primary concern was whether certification renewal would genuinely improve competence or just create unnecessary paperwork.

Key Concerns with Proposed Standards

Code of Conduct Requirement

Establishing and formalizing an agreed-upon code of conduct is widely recognized as a necessary step, but it should be clear, concise and enforceable to avoid being seen as “corporate speak.”

Seat Hours Documentation Requirement

Interview subjects emphasized that seat hours do not accurately represent an individual's competence. They expressed that experience does not always equate to skill. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding the burden of recordkeeping, especially for those operating multiple cranes daily. Some suggested that employers rather than operators should track and submit hours. BC Crane Safety maintains that seat time hours primarily indicate the recency of experience as opposed to competency. This metric determines whether the individual has been away from the field for an extended period or has recent work experience in carrying out the job duties.

Online Training Requirement

Operators acknowledged the importance of continuous education but expressed concerns about cheating and test integrity. They recommended that training content focus on specific regulatory changes rather than general crane operations. Online proctoring was mentioned as a way to maintain exam integrity.

Competency Demonstration Requirement

The competency demonstration requirement received the most favorable feedback, as operators value in-person skill assessments and the opportunity to demonstrate competence in the field with real-world evaluations or through mentorship to ensure that they are truly ready for the responsibilities of crane operation.

However, many participants expressed concerns about logistical feasibility, including the difficulty of finding qualified assessors for all crane types, the availability of assessors in

FIGURE 2 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

1. How long have you been a crane operator?

Experience levels ranged widely, from a few years to several decades. Many operators emphasized their longevity in the trade as a marker of credibility and competence.

2. How did you get into the industry?

Common entry points included family connections, apprenticeships or being pulled into crane work while employed in construction. Some noted the lack of formal pathways and credited mentorship or opportunity as key factors.

3. As a crane operator, what are you most proud of?

Operators expressed pride in performing difficult lifts safely, mastery of equipment and technical skill, earning the trust of coworkers and contributing to projects of lasting value (e.g., bridges, towers, infrastructure).

4. Think about someone in the field who you think is one of the best crane operators and a great representative of the work you do. What makes them such a good example?

Qualities highlighted included calm under pressure, attention to detail, communication and teamwork, a safety-first mindset, and the ability to anticipate problems before they occur.

5. What does it mean to be a professional crane operator? What do professional crane operators do that other crane operators don't?

Professionalism was linked to consistently safe practices, respect for others on site, mentorship of newer operators and going beyond "just showing up" by treating the work as a craft and a responsibility.

6. Who or what is your biggest headache or causes you the most difficulty when it comes to operating a crane? (Employers, customers, supervisors, other workers on site, members of the public, something else?)

Responses included untrained riggers, unrealistic expectations from supervisors or clients, pressure to rush lifts due to tight deadlines, poor site planning and lack of communication.

7. What do other workers, employers or even members of the public not understand about the complexity of crane lifts?

Most outsiders underestimate the complexity of planning and the physics involved; the impact of weather, ground conditions and site setup; and the importance of teamwork (operators cannot work safely in isolation).

8. How many crane accidents would you estimate have happened in BC in the past 5 years?

Estimates varied. Some cited "a handful," others more. The consensus was that even rare incidents have catastrophic potential, and near misses are often unreported. An informal grapevine was cited as the most common source of information.

9. When you hear or read about a crane accident, what is your immediate reaction?

Responses were emotional and included sadness and empathy for those involved; frustration, since most incidents were seen as preventable; reflection on personal responsibility and vigilance; and fear that it could happen to them.

10. While the process is still under development, it is anticipated to include four steps:

- You agree to the code of conduct.
- You accumulate and document seat hours (which you might already be doing).
- You complete one or two online modules.
- You demonstrate competence with a few critical skills.

This should all be at low or no cost to you. What is your biggest concern about this process? Where do you anticipate problems? How would you improve this process?

Concerns included:

- Seat hours: Not a true measure of skill, and burdensome to track
- Online modules: Concern over cheating and test integrity
- Competency demos: Welcomed, but worry about logistics, cost and availability
- Code of conduct: Accepted in principle, but needs to be clear and enforceable

11. Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns about certification renewal, such as good or bad news, positive implications or suggestions for BC Crane Safety to consider?

Responses included that certification should add value, not just paperwork; employers must share responsibility for training and oversight; and renewal should reinforce pride in being a professional.

12. In which geographical region do you currently work?

Operators represented a mix of urban centers and remote/rural areas. Remote operators flagged concerns about access to training or assessment locations.

13. What type of certification do you currently hold?

Most were fully certified (A ticket), with a smaller number of provisional or limited-scope tickets.

14. Which crane types are you certified in?

A broad range of responses included tower cranes, mobile cranes, folding boom and stiff boom. Many had multiple endorsements.

15. How many years of experience do you have with cranes (in the seat)?

Responses ranged from fewer than 5 years to more than 30 years. Older operators tended to express more skepticism about renewal.

16. What is your age bracket?

Operators spanned all categories, but a significant portion were in the 40 to 59 years range. Younger operators (< 30 years) often expressed more openness to recertification and continuous learning, although no respondents experienced strong disapproval.

remote areas and the associated costs (operators prefer low-cost or employer-funded testing). Many operators said that evaluations should be conducted by employers rather than an external organization.

The Value of Safety & Professionalism

Crane operators placed a significant value on a culture of safety and professionalism. Many operators distinguished between certified operators and professional crane operators. They identified professional crane operators as individuals who willingly accept personal responsibility and accountability for their work, aim for collaborative communication, and possess the knowledge, skills, experience and courage to execute safe lifts without compromising the limits of the equipment and the safety of colleagues or the public. As professionals, they view themselves as engaged with other workers, contractors and employers, and consider themselves an integral part of the team, regardless of the job size or project duration.

Industry Challenges Beyond Certification Renewal

The interviews revealed industry challenges beyond certification. Most operators cited rigging and the lack of formal rigging training as their biggest safety concern. They also lamented the lack of experienced mentors to guide newer and less skilled operators. In addition, they face long hours, consistent pressure to meet deadlines, a lack of awareness regarding crane limitations among employers and customers, and feelings of isolation from coworkers and peers. Workplace stress, stemming from high production demands, is a critical issue, and addressing mental health concerns within the industry is essential for long-term safety.

Furthermore, the interviews indicated a persistent and widespread misunderstanding of the role of BC Crane Safety and its services. Many operators and employers were not fully aware of the support available to help them meet their EHS regulatory responsibilities and ensure the safety of their workforce. While certification renewal does not address these areas, BC Crane Safety has targeted these concerns for future efforts.

Applying the Research

The research provided significant insights that BC Crane Safety is incorporating into the certification renewal program.

Adapting the Standards

Based on the research, BC Crane Safety is considering modifications to the proposed certification renewal system. The use of existing employer evaluations for competency verification is being explored, and the standard for seat hours has been revised to reflect recent and relevant experience rather than total accumulated hours.

Leveraging Professional Identity

Henri Tajfel and John Turner's 1979 social identity theory posits that individuals derive a portion of their self-concept from their membership in social groups (McLeod, 2023). Social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group affiliation, suggesting that individuals evaluate the groups to which they belong, determining the value and necessary elements of belonging (Trepte & Loy, 2017).

Closely related to social identity is professional identity. The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (2021) characterizes professional identity as an enduring

collection of attributes, values, motives and experiences that define individuals in their professional roles. Hardof-Jaffe et al. (2020) emphasize that professional identity is adaptable and shaped through work experiences and meaningful feedback, allowing individuals to evolve and refine their expertise over time. Social identity theory suggests that individuals naturally form groups based on shared occupations, expertise or backgrounds (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the skilled trades, these group dynamics can significantly influence workplace culture and perceptions of professionalism.

When industry and safety associations recognize and support workers who consistently renew their certifications, they help establish a strong "in-group"—individuals who visibly demonstrate their commitment to skill, safety and professional standards. This visible distinction reinforces a culture of excellence across crews, companies and jobsites. Even those initially hesitant about certification renewal begin to perceive its value as the occupation gains recognition not just as a job, but as a respected profession. The pride associated with certification becomes a cultural signal, encouraging broader participation and elevating the trade as a whole (Haslam, 2004).

An organization can leverage this understanding of social and professional identity to foster greater professionalism within the crane industry. Burns (2019) describes professionalism as a combination of formal status, specialized knowledge, and a commitment to quality and competence. Sattar and Yusoff (2020) outline key competencies of professionalism, including:

- demonstrating respect, integrity and accountability
- commitment to excellence and ongoing development
- adherence to ethical principles and business practices
- responsiveness to employers, supervisors and coworkers

By leveraging social identity theory, an organization can influence industry culture by fostering in-groups—those who proactively embrace certification renewal—and making their professional commitment visible. In turn, this encourages those who may be resistant to change to recognize the benefits of maintaining their credentials and, ultimately, their professional standing. This dynamic is captured in Figure 3 (p. 28).

By framing certification renewal as an essential step in professional growth, BC Crane Safety seeks to build upon the distinction crane operators make between certified crane operators and professional crane operators. The latter group actively engages in continuous learning, skill refinement and mentorship.

Further efforts to leverage the power of professional identity and career recognition include a stackable credential system where operators who renew their certification and have attained a threshold of seat time hours gain distinct recognition as professional crane operators.

As seen in Figure 4 (p. 29), certifications that have been renewed are not only visually distinct from the original versions of certification but nuanced to recognize those operators whose longevity and experience consistently strive for a higher level of professionalism. Crane operators who renew their certification are issued a silver ID plate confirming their original certification year. Operators who have accumulated a yet-to-be-determined total number of hours in operation are issued a gold ID plate. This framework not only recognizes years of experience but validates an operator's continued competence, communicating their professional reputation to employers, regulators and contractors.

Certification renewal has the potential to formalize the status of a crane operator's continued excellence, recognize their specialized knowledge, and standardize best practices around quality, accountability and responsiveness. The goal is to foster pride, belonging and self-esteem among crane operators, encouraging them to embrace certification renewal as a marker of professionalism rather than a regulatory burden.

Enhancing Communication Efforts

Effective communication is critical to ensuring widespread acceptance and adoption of the certification renewal program. McCorkle (2015) emphasized the importance of identifying both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to strengthen certification programs. Leveraging elements from Sechrist and Berlin's (2006) Perceived Value of Certification tool, BC Crane Safety aims to highlight key benefits in each category:

- Intrinsic motivators:** Reinforcing professional credibility, validating specialized knowledge, acknowledging commitment to industry best practices

- Extrinsic motivators:** Enhancing stakeholder confidence, increasing employer recognition, improving peer acknowledgment

Addressing Communication Barriers

The crane industry operates within a tight-knit community where informal communication is prevalent. This can lead to misinformation, particularly regarding new regulatory requirements. Clear, targeted messaging that differentiates between certified crane operators and professional crane operators helps clarify the purpose and value of certification renewal. The distinction must be well-defined to encourage buy-in from experienced operators while ensuring that the requirements remain practical and achievable. Additionally, the messaging must be consistent, repetitive and customized to different stakeholder groups, as recommended by Rajan and Ganesan (2017).

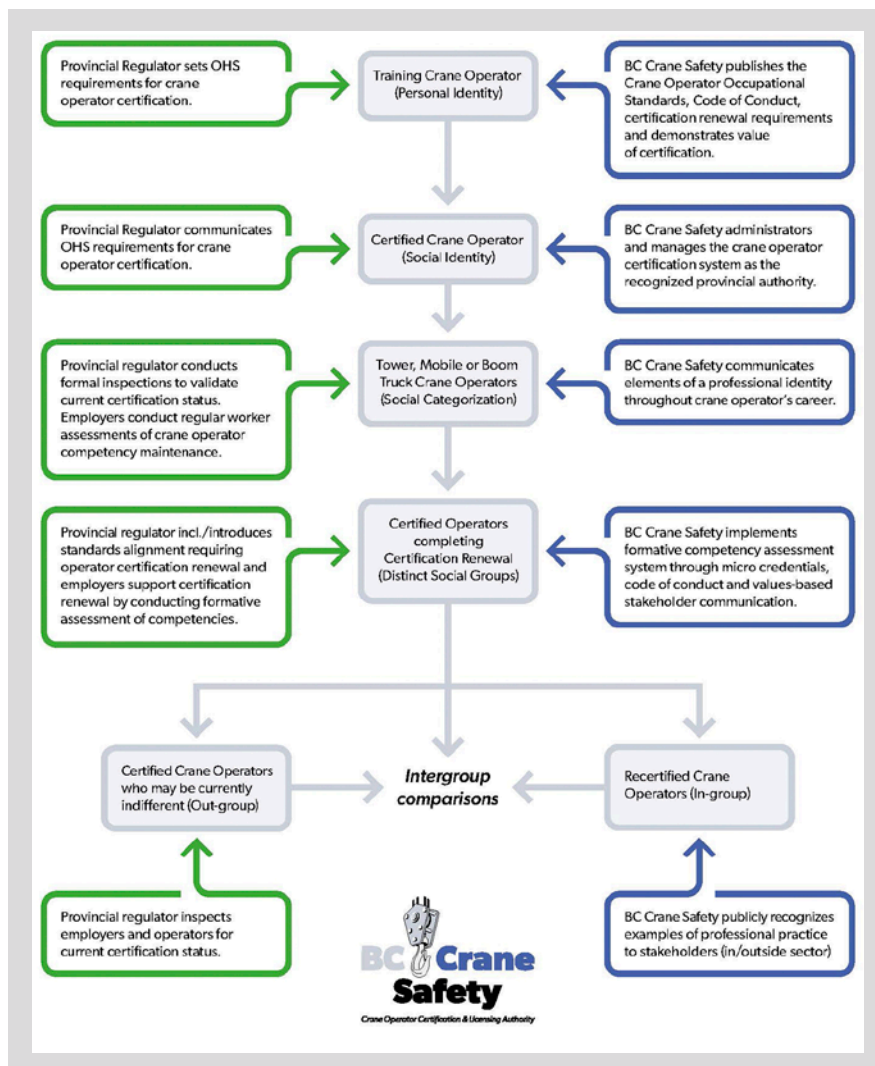
Leveraging Stakeholder Engagement

Employers, regulatory bodies and training institutions are all key stakeholders who can play a significant role in promoting professionalism and certification renewal. Employers can reinforce the value of certification renewal by incorporating it into competency assessments and career advancement opportunities. Regulators can mandate certification renewal as part of workplace safety compliance measures. The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (2021) suggests that integrating professionalism into training programs can help establish early awareness and acceptance of lifelong competency maintenance. Training institutions in the crane industry can embed certification renewal principles into their curricula to instill professionalism from the start of an operator's career.

Harnessing Communities of Practice

Knaster (2021) defines communities of practice as "organized groups of people with a common interest in a specific technical or business domain" who "regularly collaborate to share information, improve their skills, and actively work on advancing their knowledge of the domain." Communities of practice provide an effective way to promote industry-wide knowledge sharing and collaboration (Knaster, 2021). Benefits of communities of practice include faster dissemination of accurate information to combat misinformation, stronger peer support networks to encourage certification renewal as a shared professional commitment, and collaborative problem-solving to enhance safety and operational standards across the industry.

FIGURE 3
SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AS APPLIED TO CRANE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION RENEWAL



BC Crane Safety started with informal communities of practice in 2019, but these groups initially met in response to emerging, timely issues. More recently, the groups have formalized around specific issues and now meet quarterly, complemented by workshops with subcommittees. The goal of these groups is to incorporate community of practice discussions for crane operators to exchange insights, discuss industry challenges and advocate for certification renewal as a professional standard.

By implementing these communication strategies, an organization can transform certification renewal from a perceived regulatory burden into an industry-recognized professional milestone that signifies a commitment to excellence and safety.

Addressing Perceptions of Recertification

The initial discussions surrounding the concept of certification renewal and the in-depth interviews highlight the need to address negative perceptions of the process being a “cash grab” and an additional burden for employers and operators. Concerns included the required time off work to demonstrate competencies and the need to contract a third party to conduct the competency review. To mitigate these concerns, BC Crane Safety offered the certification renewal process at no cost for operators who use BC Crane Safety’s SkillRecord Passport app, which delivers an electronic copy of the certification card for convenient access in a phone wallet. For those who prefer a hard copy, a nominal handling fee would be applied.

Furthermore, the critical competency demonstration would be carried out in the normal operation of business, by a qualified and competent supervisor (the employer’s supervisor) who registers with BC Crane Safety and signs off on the competency demonstration requirements.

An Early Success

When BC Crane Safety began analyzing the rationale behind occupational certification, they anticipated that professional identity would be a critical tool for connecting with and influencing crane operators. In 2021, BC Crane Safety (2021b) launched the “Level Up; Own Your Lift” campaign to recap their roles in and responsibilities for worker and worksite safety. Early work with the campaign demonstrated renewed pride and interest in the importance of certification with the provincial regulator and certain employers. This empowered the organization to incorporate other elements of professionalism as they aim for initial ISO/IEC 17024 alignment and certification renewal (BC Crane Safety, 2020a).

Best Practices

To maximize the successful implementation of certification renewal, BC Crane Safety is applying best practices that go beyond cranes and can strengthen safety initiatives that require significant change and widespread adoption. These include leveraging social identity, distinguishing a higher level of professionalism, and strengthening communication and industry buy-in.

Leverage Social Identity

Research shows that social identity strongly shapes workplace culture. When workers see themselves as part of a group that values safety, excellence and continuous improvement,

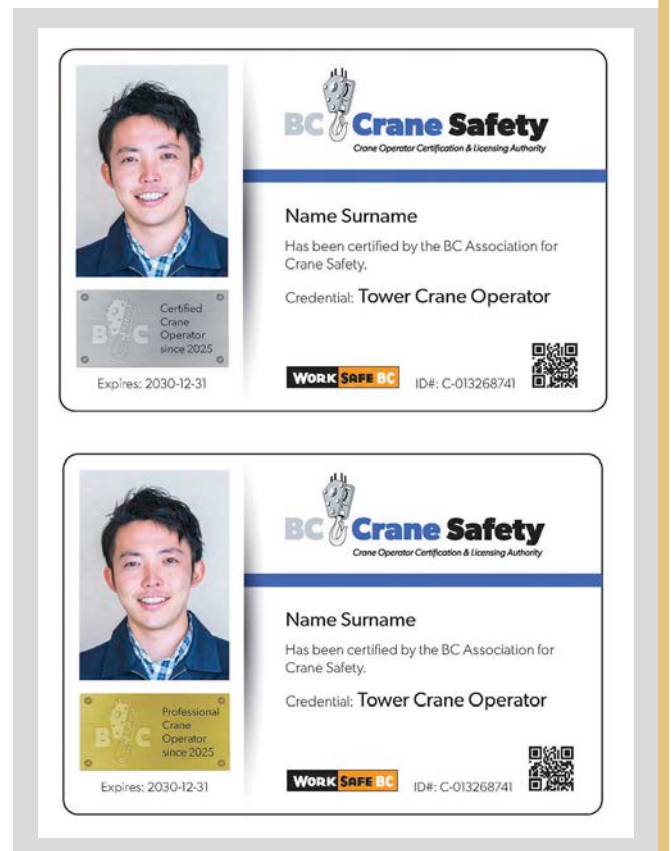
they are more likely to uphold those standards (McLeod, 2023). This principle applies to any workforce transformation, from adopting new safety technologies to embedding human performance principles. By framing changes as a chance to elevate professional identity, leaders can move initiatives from resistance to pride. Following BC Crane Safety’s example, organizations can use this approach to make certification renewal an aspirational standard by:

- finding and supporting champions of certification renewal—regulators, employers, supervisors, contractors, and experienced crane operators—who model professionalism and mentorship
- recognizing and rewarding early adopters through public acknowledgment on social media and in industry publications and by providing leadership opportunities, reinforcing the benefits of certification renewal
- encouraging discussion and comparison between early adopters and those hesitant to renew, allowing operators to see tangible benefits in professional status, safety records and career opportunities

Distinguish a Higher Level of Professionalism

Recognition is one of the most powerful motivators in career development. BC Crane Safety identified four categories of excellence: participation in renewal, accumulated seat hours, competency demonstration and commitment to a code

FIGURE 4 OPERATOR ID PLATES SHOWING CERTIFICATION STATUS



By embracing certification renewal as a tool for professionalism, crane operators not only secure their credentials but enhance their industry's reputation, improve workplace safety and ensure long-term career viability.



RAINSTAR/E+/GETTY IMAGES

of conduct. Achievements in these areas are formally acknowledged, giving operators elevated recognition from both peers and employers.

This same principle applies broadly; organizations that distinguish and celebrate higher levels of professionalism create natural incentives for continuous learning and safer practices. Whether in construction, utilities or healthcare, building a visible path of advancement motivates people to aim higher.

Strengthen Communication & Industry Buy-in

The success of certification renewal—or any change program—depends on clear, transparent and continuous communication. BC Crane Safety has invested in a multipronged communication strategy that others can emulate. This plan includes:

- marketing initiatives that reframe requirements as professional milestones rather than burdens
- outreach to municipalities, contractors and industry partners so stakeholders see renewal as essential to safety and hiring standards
- simple, repeatable messages such as “professional crane operators always plan lifts” to reinforce expected behaviors
- communities of practice that create space for peers to share, learn and normalize change (Knaster, 2021)

Finalizing the Certification Renewal Framework

The road to certification renewal is not just about compliance, it is fundamentally about elevating the crane operator profession, strengthening industry safety and ensuring sustained competency. Given BC Crane Safety's stakeholder collaboration and research, a validated path for a certification renewal process that emphasizes value, accountability and practicality is clear. With these strategies in place, the final steps can focus on implementing policies, refining assessment models and ensuring ease of use for crane operators. Key milestones include:

- completing the policy framework for certification renewal
- launching pilot programs to evaluate the effectiveness of competency assessments and training requirements
- integrating employer-led competency verification to streamline the renewal process and reduce the administrative burden on operators
- continuing industry consultations to refine the program and ensure alignment with employer and regulatory expectations

Looking Ahead: A Shared Responsibility for Industry Growth

The success of certification renewal depends on collective industry support. Employers, regulators and operators must share the responsibility of maintaining high safety and competency standards. By embracing certification renewal as a tool for professionalism, crane operators not only secure their credentials but enhance their industry's reputation, improve workplace safety and ensure long-term career viability.

This is the beginning of an important cultural shift. An organization must be committed to lead this transformation and work alongside the industry to make certification renewal a defining feature of professionalism in crane operations.

Ongoing Commitment to Transparency & Progress

While implementing these initiatives, BC Crane Safety plans to provide regular updates on progress, adoption rates and industry feedback. Future research will investigate the impact of certification renewal and identify areas for further improvement.

The future of crane operations in British Columbia is characterized by professionalism, safety and continuous learning. Now is the time to elevate standards, take ownership of lifts and set the standard for excellence in crane operation. **PSJ**

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