

Twenty years on, risk of death and serious injury is much diminished

NCCCO marks crane operator

The past two decades have seen CCO certification established as the industry's premier crane-related credential. Whether judged by accident statistics, industry endorsements, accreditation commendations, employer preferences or the evaluations of those who have been certified (operators, riggers, signalpersons and others), CCO certification has clearly achieved its mission of improving the safety and professionalism of crane and rigging operations that it was entrusted with more than 20 years ago.

But, despite its grass-roots origins, its unwavering safety mission, and its solid industry support, the success of the non-profit organization set up to develop and administer that certification – the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) – was by no means always so assured.

“Initial response to what at that time was the new and often misunderstood process of certification was mixed,” recalls Kerry Hulse, who played a leading role in

steering the certification process from its infancy and currently serves the NCCCO Board of Directors as Vice President.

“But as we sit here today and reflect on the progress that has been made over the years, I can certainly say it has been a remarkable journey – even one that has far exceeded the expectations of those who contributed their time and expertise to this effort for years even prior to the formation of NCCCO.”

Hulse, who is Vice President, Deep South Crane & Rigging, Houston, TX, was chairman of the original Certification Task Force established by the Specialized Carriers & Rigging Association (SC&RA) that ultimately led to the formation of NCCCO. He served as Chairman of the Commission from its inception until his election to the Board in 2012. “That initial group of industry volunteers had one simple (albeit formidable) goal,” he said. “Namely, to make this industry a safer place in which to work. And all the evidence suggests this has been achieved.”

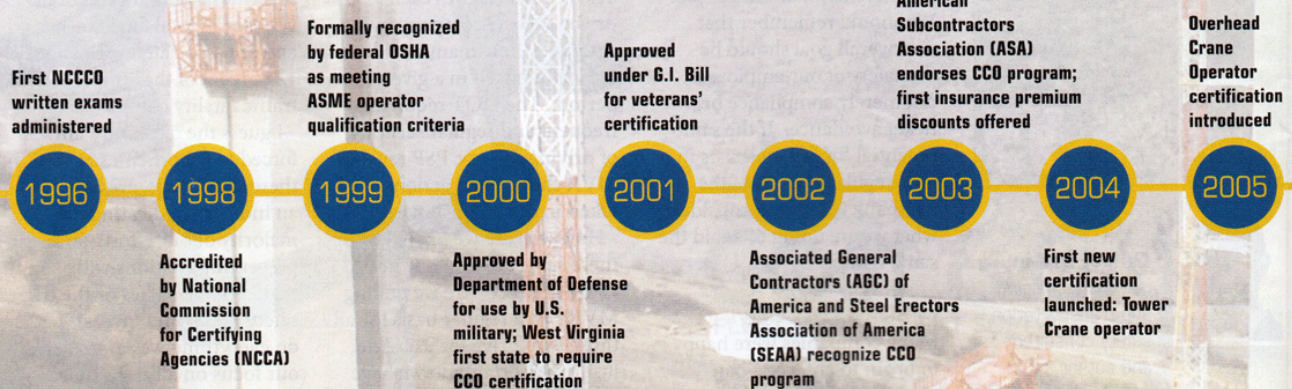
NCCCO President, Thom Sickelsteel,



concur. He is certain the organization's deep industry roots have played a large part in fulfilling its mission. “None of the major improvements in jobsite safety that have come with the introduction of professional personnel certification would have been possible without the industry support that established NCCCO two decades ago, and has continued to sustain it ever since,” he says. This translated into subject matter expertise provided by dedicated volunteers, as well as vital financial assistance (notably from the nation's crane manufacturers) that was of particular importance in the early years, he said.

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NCCCO MAJOR PROGRAM MILESTONES



two decades of certification

“CCO certification continues to be required due to the profound positive impact that it has on the safety of crane operations overall.”

GRAHAM BRENT, NCCCO CEO



ENR Magazine bestowed its Award of Excellence when NCCCO introduced its Mobile Crane Practical Exam (shown being piloted) in 1999. OSHA officially recognized CCO certification that same year.

Decline in crane fatalities

And the effectiveness of that assessment is now well-established. Indeed, studies have demonstrated an 80 percent decline in crane-related fatalities where professionally developed certification has been adopted, said Brent. But just as significant in establishing CCO certification as a key component of workplace risk mitigation have been employers' personal experiences of its benefits. "CCO certification has been successful for one reason: It works," Brent said.

NCCCO was established by SC&RA in January 1995 as an independent, non-profit personnel certification organization following almost a decade of commitment by a group of industry volunteers dedicated to improve the safety of lifting operations. "They believed the solution to reducing the incidence of crane accidents lay in part by establishing effective performance standards for those who work in and around cranes," said NCCCO Chief Executive Officer, Graham Brent. "The result of this vision, determination and sheer hard work was a fair, valid and reliable assessment of crane operator knowledge and skills."

"CCO certification continues to be required by employers, insurance companies, project owners and risk managers due to the profound positive impact that it has on the safety of crane operations overall." And the pace of adoption continues to grow, he said, noting the achievement of another milestone just last year when the 100,000th person to be certified through NCCCO programs was issued his CCO certification card.

Such success was still the stuff of dreams two decades ago. Following the inception of testing in 1996, it would be a further three years before the inaugural

certification program (for mobile crane operators) was completed with the introduction of the first practical exam. And it would be another five years before CCO mobile crane certification had gathered sufficient momentum for NCCCO to consider expanding into other types of cranes. CCO certifications soon garnered awards from both national and international accreditation bodies, and became officially recognized by federal OSHA.

Tower crane operator and overhead crane operator certification programs were the initial products of that expansion, and were followed in 2008 by the first CCO certifications for those engaged in crane-related activity such as signaling operators and rigging loads.

In addition to other types of cranes and similar equipment such as digger derricks and dedicated pile drivers (due for early 2016 launch), NCCCO programs now also address the certification needs specific to crane inspectors and lift directors.

"The last five years have seen a virtual explosion of interest by the industry in developing programs for specific

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Washington State selects NCCCO to develop state Crane Certifier program; Signaller Certification introduced

NCCCO administers 500,000th exam; "Star" Recertification Program launched

Employer Recognition Program launched

The 100,000th person to test through NCCCO is certified; number of certifications issued passes 240,000 mark; NCCCO introduces Boom Truck certification

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014



American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredits NCCCO; U.S. Department of Energy approves NCCCO programs

Rigger Levels I and II introduced

International expansion begins; tests conducted in the Middle East and South America

VCO Online Verification System unveiled for public access

activities,” says Joel Oliva, NCCCO Director of Operations and Program Development. “Many of these have been accomplished by NCCCO through strategic alliances with other associations such as the Crane Certification Association of America, the Articulating Crane Council of North America, and the Pile Driving Contractors Association,” he says. “In each case, it is the industry that has approached NCCCO to request a program tailored to their specific needs.”

The evolution of NCCCO certification programs to embrace a wider range of crane operation and related activity had occurred at a breadth and pace that would have startled those initial industry volunteers who established the framework for CCO certification over two decades ago, Brent said. “As driven and enthusiastic as the initial group of volunteers was, they could never have envisioned that, within little more than a decade, one program would give birth to some 25 certifications, all of them designed to improve workers’ knowledge and skill, stimulate training and make the worksite a safer place,” Brent added.

Completely independent of training

While NCCCO always has taken the position that to conduct training itself would compromise its status as a third-party, independent body, a prime element of its original mission was to stimulate training within industry. This, too, has been achieved, notes Hulse. “We always felt that training held a vital key to improving crane safety, and that, if we developed a fair, but stringent, certification process, it would encourage folks to step up and seek the professional training we thought was necessary to raise the knowledge level across the industry,” he said. A major problem at the time, however, was the scarcity of such training.

“When NCCCO was first established you could count the number of training companies on one hand,” Hulse recalls. At last review, more than 120 firms were listed on NCCCO’s web site as providing courses leading to CCO certification. “I believe we can say “mission accomplished” on that aspect too,” says Hulse.

The year ahead

NCCCO is preparing a slate of activities and announcements as part of a special recognition program marking the twentieth anniversary of its founding. “Naturally, we want to be sure that we celebrate this historic milestone appropriately,” said NCCCO CEO Brent, “and we’ve selected a number of projects that will tell the story of NCCCO both for those who were there at the beginning and for the tens of thousands who have benefited from it since.”

NCCCO also intends to use the opportunity of the special anniversary to help position the organization for further growth over the next two decades and beyond through a number of important announcements during the year.

News about these and other developments related to its 20th Anniversary Recognition Program is available at: nccco.org/20Years where regular updates will be posted.

NCCCO’s 20th Anniversary Recognition Program is generously sponsored by:



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