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Lifting Industry Standards

Working Load Limit-WLL ??

It is becoming increasingly apparent that a definition from Australian Standards AS4991-2004 has become the latest buzz word for rating crane capacities. It seems like everyone is using WLL, with even Safe Work Australia using it in their draft Crane Code of Practice out for public comment. Being one of the older members of the Crane Industry, it was quite a wrench changing from SWL (Safe Working Load) to MRC (Maximum Rated Capacity) in 2002. SWL or MRC is required to be prominently displayed on the boom or luffing ram. This is even required for earthmoving units such as loaders or excavators when they are used as cranes. Technically, it should be MRC, but allowance has been given to use SWL for all the thousands of cranes (and earthmoving units used as cranes) that used this as a standard prior to 2002.

The use of WLL as dictated in AS4991-2004 is for lifting devices **below** the crane hook. Used in this context, the definition is fine; however when used as a means of rating the maximum lifting capacity of cranes, the use of WLL may cause confusion with the existing Australian Standards requesting MRC (or SWA for older cranes). A simple example is fitting a 25 tonne hook block on a 1200 tonne crane. The WLL for this crane is now 25 tonne as the crane can only lift 25 tonnes. Modern cranes with multiple configurations of booms, jibs, counterweights, lift enhancers, working radius, hook blocks, and outrigger settings to name a few, will all affect the WLL of the crane. Conceivably, we could have hundreds of different WLL's for the same crane solely dependant on the configuration in use. Our recommendation is to use MRC only as this is the correct method of rating the maximum lift capacity of the crane and ensures that the correct hire rate is received. I am sure that the owner of the 1200 tonne given as an example would not be happy to receive the hourly rate of a 25 tonne crane.

Jeff Brundell
CICA Director
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