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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
Hoisting Machine Operators Advisory Board
830 Punchbowl Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Phone: (808) 586 9116 Fax: (808) 586 9104

NEW CERTIFICATION REQUIRED OF CRANE OPERATORS

Effective October 1, 2003, the department of labor and industrial relations will begin enforcement of the new requirement for state certification of crane operators who perform construction work. Unsafe crane operation resulted in worker fatalities and injuries, public endangerment, and significant damage to structures and the cranes. Accidents costs typically range from \$25,000 to several millions of dollars.

It is expected that the new requirement will affect more than 600 crane operators employed by private employers, the state and the counties. The Hawaii Occupational Safety and Health Division (HIOSH) has delayed enforcement until nearly all affected crane operators have the opportunity to take the required written and practical examinations, which are currently administered by the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO). NCCCO is currently the only testing body accepted by the Hoisting Machine Operators' Advisory Board.

Employers who employ crane operators to perform construction work without a state certificate after October 1, 2003 are subject to citations and penalties up to \$70,000. Crane operators who knowingly operate a crane without the requisite certification may be denied future certification and could be fined a civil penalty.

Application forms and press releases will soon be available from the HIOSH Office at 830 Punchbowl Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 or can be downloaded from the HIOSH homepage at www.hiosh.hawaii.gov. For more information, please contact Lora Contreras, executive director of the Hoisting Machine Operators' Advisory Board, at (808) 521-3019 or fax at (808) 585-0422.

Certification also requires that applicants pass a physical examination and a drug test. The law requiring state certification was passed by the legislature in 1997. In 1998, the Hoisting Machine Operators' Advisory Board was created to develop the rules for certification, and in 2000, the position of Executive Director was filled. The Hoisting Machine Operators' Advisory Board is comprised of five members who represent labor, management, safety and health professionals, crane leasing companies, and crane operators. They serve without compensation and are appointed by the Governor.