

JOB TRAINING

New construction tech debuts at Local 701's Canby facility

By Don McIntosh

It's a forklift. It's a crane. It's a cherry-picker. It's all of the above. For a week in early March, 22 journeymen and apprentices in Operating Engineers Local 701 got hands on with a new breed of high-tech heavy equipment. As part of a partnership with Kansas City distributor Blue Hat Crane and west-coast equipment supplier Peterson Cat, the union training center in Canby held a 40-hour training so members could get experience operating two brand-new tele-handlers made by an Italian company called Magni. A telehandler (short for telescopic handler) is used to lift loads to and from places that a conventional forklift can't reach. But these are pretty unusual telehandlers.

Italian-made and painted red, you could say they're the heavy equipment version of a Ferrari. Or, with dozens of attachments available — from forks, hooks, and winches to buckets and suction cups to set glass

— you could also call them swiss army knives.

The 24-ton RTH 6.30 has an upper works that rotates 360°, and a lower works that's stabilized by an automatic leveling device and variable-length scissor-like outriggers. It's a smart crane, with a computerized system that inhibits operators from making movements that would topple the machine. It can deliver loads up to 5,500 lbs 97' high, and operate in all kinds of environments, like up on a sidewalk, so that it doesn't have to block a lane of traffic. Operators don't even have to be in the cab: After switching on a remote control mode, they can operate the crane arm with a handheld controller.

The smaller 16.10, meanwhile, is more suited for

large, bulky loads, and can lift up to 16 tons. In both machines, an RFID tag in each attachment tells the onboard computer which relative load chart to use.

Several contractors came to observe during the week-long training, Local 701 training director Lonnie Land said, and almost immediately after the training finished, Hoffman Construction put one of the new machines into use, and may deploy as many as eight of them on its PDX terminal expansion project.



OPERATING A CRANE ... BY REMOTE CONTROL. Members of Operating Engineers Local 701 spent a week learning how to run new state-of-the-art Italian-made heavy machinery.



IBEW Local 48 members now get pregnancy benefits

IBEW Local 48 and the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) expanded the time loss benefit with Harrison Trust to provide pregnancy benefits to members through their third trimester. The new benefit rolled out Jan. 1.

A pregnant woman who stops working within 13 weeks prior to the doctor-certified projected due date will be paid \$800 per week in time loss benefits. Disability is not a requirement, and the member's health care will be paid without reducing her hour bank. The benefits will also continue 13 weeks after the birth of the child, for a maximum of 26 weeks of benefits. All members who qualify for this new Harrison benefit, regardless of classification, get the full weekly time loss amount.

The Trust will also pay monthly health insurance premiums so that the member will re-

ceive six months of free health insurance coverage during that time for their families.

The intention of the benefit is to empower pregnant members to do what they think is best with respect to working while pregnant and while recovering from pregnancy, NECA/IBEW said in a press release. The coverage acknowledges the fact that working on a construction job in the final trimester can be very challenging — and that the first three months of a baby's life are important. It also addresses how difficult it can be to find infant care during the hours an electrician works.

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