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Cranes/Derricks rule clarified for demolition and underground construction

September 20, 2012 - Connecticut

On August 17, OSHA issued a final rule and notice of proposed rule making that applies the requirements of the August 2010 cranes and derricks in construction standard to demolition work and underground construction. The direct final rule will apply the same crane rules to underground construction and demolition that are already being used by other construction sectors, and will streamline OSHA's standards by eliminating the separate cranes and derricks standard currently used for underground and demolition work.

The revisions benefit construction contractors that engage in underground construction or demolition work, in addition to other types of construction work, because these contractors will now be subject to a single standard rather than having some of their activities covered under subpart CC and other work covered by subpart DD.

This action will avoid the confusion that would result if new subpart CC covers part of a project and revised Sec. 1926.800(t) covers another part of the project. For example, in a cut-and-cover tunneling project, the underground construction standard applies only after covering the excavation in such a manner as to establish conditions characteristic of underground construction. 29 CFR 1926.800(a).

Therefore, under the current requirements, subpart CC would apply to the work while the excavation is open, but after covering the excavation, subpart DD would apply, thereby resulting in the same crane or derrick being subject to different standards during different phases of the project. Finally, this action will facilitate employer compliance because demolition and underground construction contractors will no longer be subject to the outdated requirements in prior Sec. 1926.550, which relied heavily on pre-1970 consensus standards.

The direct final rule will become effective November 15, unless OSHA receives a significant adverse comment by September 17.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540