



Information Item	CANZ Monthly Online Newsletter
Sponsor	CEO
Date	June 2019

With their heads in the sky – becoming a crane operator

Had you seen them arrive, it would have been a sight to marvel at – three 2,100 tonne cranes arriving via large ship into Waitemata Harbour from China.

At \$20 million each, they were the newest addition to the Ports of Auckland (POA) suite of five other cranes, received in October 2018.

Complete with full LED lighting and solar panels installed on the roof of the machine house, dual twin spreaders, and standing at 82.3 metres high to the apex – the driver’s cab sits more than 10m higher than POA’s current cranes.

[One day, Renee Nepia hopes to call one of those cabs – and any others should the opportunity arise – her office.](#)

Currently a Stevedore, she is training to be a crane operator – guided by one of POA’s trainers and assessors.

Initial training lasts approximately six to eight weeks with a formal assessment taken six months later. This allows Renee, and other trainees, time to experience different vessels and environmental conditions.

Renee’s interest in working for the ports was piqued seven years ago when her cousin, who worked as a lasher, described it as a dream job.

Starting as a straddle driver two years ago, it didn’t matter to her that the POA working environment was a male-dominated one.

“I actually don’t mind it. I mean it is a bit of a challenge, but that’s the nature of the job. In my previous work experience, I had always worked in male-dominated industries, so it wasn’t anything new to me.

Taking Renee through the in-house training is Victoria Mulholland, who has been with POA for six years.

Due to the inherent risk of the industry, health and safety underpins every aspect of the training’s theoretical and practical processes. It underpins POA’s staff work ethic, too.

So, what Victoria looks for in a trainee is someone who is willing to listen – because mistakes can be devastatingly costly.

“For me, it comes down to someone’s attitude because if you get someone that isn’t interested, they’re wasting their time and mine,” she says. “Not that we’ve had that type of person.”

And personal responsibility is also crucial, she adds.

“There is only so much I can teach them in terms of driving, Standard Operation Procedures and Health and Safety.

“But once they’ve been armed with that information, it really comes down to what that person decides to do with that info.

“So, I’m always looking for a good standard of responsibility and accountability for, not just their safety, but the safety of their workmates as well.”

Yet, the best way to train with heavy machinery is to get hands-on experience, and the best way to do that is spend time in the seat – a simulator seat.

Providing a safe and controlled environment, POA’s simulator gives the trainee confidence that they will be able to operate such a large crane, thus reducing the amount of training time required in the crane itself.

It allows simulations of all crane functions, camera displays, automated safety functions, as well as the terminal’s container management system.

Additionally, using the simulators means that training is not dependent on a crane availability, while operating metrics such as the swing, travelling arc, spreader impacts and moves per hour are tracked.

While there aren’t exact figures of how many people have taken advantage of the state-of-art technology, it has been a starting point for straddle and crane training since January 2016. It is also used for pre-employment aptitude testing.

Once Renee completes her six-week process, and Victoria is confident in her skill and competency, she will receive a certificate from the company acknowledging her ability to operate.

Six months to a year later, and hopefully with more experience under her belt, a further amendment process will determine Renee’s quality as a crane operator.

While a completely internal training regime, the port has also worked alongside the Ports Industry Association Education & Training Sub-Committee supported by the MITO to develop the NZ Certificate in Port Operations (New Zealand Qualifications Authority level 3).

The qualification is online now and POA currently have 35 operational staff enrolled, with an aim for all its operational staff to register and become nationally qualified in the industry.

Listing the pros in the crane industry as an operator, Victoria gives three answers – the money, the office view, and the excitement.

“It is hard work, but rewarding,” she says. “There is that risk involved, and when something goes wrong it is never anything small, unfortunately.”

But when asked what advice she would give someone intimidated by that risk or how best to handle a career path in a male-dominated industry, Victoria says: “It’s not a big deal - if we can do it, then you can do it. But from all the women that I’ve met and trained with, our abilities spoke for themselves.”

“We matched the guys and in a lot of cases, we could outdo them, too.”



Thank you to the Ports of Auckland, Alex Wallace Photography, for providing the two photos.

Newsletter Disclaimer:

The information in any CANZ newsletter is for general use only. The information has been provided by CANZ and by third parties including CANZ members. While CANZ has reasonably endeavoured to provide accurate information, neither CANZ nor the third parties provide any guarantees regarding the correctness, currency, completeness or suitability of the information for any particular purpose. It should not be relied on in place of appropriate specific advice or verification. Opinions provided by third parties on any matter do not necessarily represent the opinion or policy of CANZ.

The newsletter also contains promotional information about third parties and their products and services, including references to CANZ sponsors, and links to third party websites. CANZ does not endorse third party products or services, and any dealings with third parties, including accessing their websites, will be at the user's sole risk.