Special Edition
Intercomp Company
REPRINT:

May/June'15

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Crane Scales – What You Need To Know

Trends in Crane Scales

By Scott Elmgren

The crane scale has been a steadfast icon of the weighing industry for decades. Evolving from its most basic form to the hi-tech versions available today, these staples of shipyards, warehouses and manufacturing have lived through some big changes in the world, and as the world and technology have evolved, these scales have evolved with them.

How they've evolved

The evolution of crane scales hasn't been much different than that of other types of scales: dial indicators giving way to digital displays, wireless communication, and increased capacity and accuracy have been common across the industry. These features have become table-stakes in a world of increasing competition where small differences in how these scales function can make or break purchase decisions.

New CS1500LED: Bright, digital readouts are common on many crane scales. Intercomp's CS1500 LED crane scale features a large, 1.5" display with adjustable brightness, and features RFX™ Wireless Weighing Technology, to make controlling and collecting weight data safer and more convenient.

A large, bright, digital display makes reading weights much easier in crane scale applications, but even with these larger screens, viewing weight readings can present challenges when the scale is sitting high up in the air or when the load is in motion. Because of this, it's no surprise that remote displays, and wireless communication technologies like Intercomp's RFX™ Wireless Weighing Technology have become a common convenience feature in these devices.

Along with larger displays and wireless communication, the capacity and accuracy of these devices has also improved. In fact, many units have even earned legal-for-trade certification, such as NTEP, in order to charge based on the weight being shown on the scale; a great feature and selling point that many customers are looking for.

With new features and technology, higher capacities, and certified

accuracy, it's easy to see why the crane scale has become a common site at many jobsites, ports and warehouses all around the world. But even with their established existence, change is on the horizon for how these scales are being used, and what lies in store for them moving forward.

Current trends

Continued use of existing scales, on-board weighing systems, data acquisition and shifts in buying habits are all very apparent trends that continue to have an impact in the weights and measurements industry. Crane scales are no exception, and companies that recognize these trends and adapt to meet them will be the ones that come out on top.

Overall quality design and a need for easy repairs has been the motus operandi for crane scales to date. This has resulted in many early models still in active service today, and while this leads to an opportunity for service centers to capitalize on, it also means relatively less new scales finding their place below a hook. It's no surprise that planned obsoletion has taken a back seat to reliability when considering the realities of the jobs these scales are tasked to perform each day, and with a large number of existing units still being used today, there is an opportunity for manufacturers and dealers to sell new units by retiring old ones that should no longer be in service.

On-board weighing systems common on many modern cranes and hoists are another consideration in the world of crane scales today. In the not too distant past, it was an everyday sight to see crane scales hanging from many hooks at a port, but now these scales are often being used as a way to validate on-board weighing systems. This role change doesn't necessarily

CS3000: Available in capacities up to 100,000lbs, Intercomp's CS3000 is built to thrive in harsh environments with shock-mounted electronics in a weatherproof case to provide maximum protection against the elements and rough usage.

indicate decreasing demand for crane scales; it just reflects a shift in how they are being used on the modern jobsite. Another big advantage to using crane scales is many models feature data tracking and storage capabilities.

Data recording is becoming more and more common in our digital world, and this data is getting tracked and analyzed at various levels for various reasons, depending on the application. Crane scales are no exception, and the need to record and analyze the data they are receiving is driving the use of data tracking software

IntercompWeigh software: Software programs like IntercompWeigh™ can communicate wirelessly with scales enabling users to view scale data, customize layouts, manage weighing processes, and generate reports in one, easy-to-use program.

and devices. Being able to monitor loads remotely can help prevent jobsite accidents, and in the unfortunate event that something does happen, the data can be a useful tool to analyze where things went wrong and prevent similar incidents from happening again. Preventing accidents is just one way companies are using this data, and how it gets used varies per application and company. However, the need to understand how these weight readings impact operations, safety and the bottom line are becoming more and more important.

It's no secret that the Internet has affected the way in which we do business every day, making the world a much smaller place. With an increasing number of companies producing their own crane scale models, the Internet makes it much easier for potential customers to gain access to these new scales. This has also given way to a shift in buying habits.

As with other industries, price has become a main (if not the) driving force behind how some customers are shopping for crane scales. With prices for various makes and models published all over the web, it is much easier for customers to shop based on price—once they've made the decision on what scale fits their needs. This has somewhat commoditized the market, but manufacturers and dealers can combat this by reinforcing value-added services like calibration and repairs.

Another by-product of this development has been more manufacturing companies adopting Minimum Advertised Price (MAP) polices in an attempt to correct retailers trying to sell on price alone. If frequently faced with customers trying to buy on price, another way dealers can arm themselves for the *price fight* is to keep stock of commonly ordered units. Many times the convenience of being able to ship

the product in a few days far outweighs the cost savings of waiting.

Called by many names: load cells, dynamometers, tension links, load links, etc.—more and more companies are producing these compact in-line weighing links that can sometimes take the place of a crane scale. Utilizing much of the same technology as crane scales, these units are now offered with wireless communication to remote indicators, and with the addition of a bottom swivel hook, can replace crane scales for many applications. Another benefit to tension links is that they can be connected to each wire rope being used in the lift to provide weight readings at each point; critical information for more complicated lifts.

Intercomp TL Series: TL8500™ Wireless tension link scales communicating to an Intercomp TL RFX™ wireless handheld indicator allows simultaneous viewing of data from up to four links, including total weight.

The future of crane scales

Crane scales have become an established presence in the weighing industry, and while the ways they are being used is shifting, this just provides an opportunity for continuous improvement and innovation. As long as companies pay attention to the ways people are using these products, new advancements and improvements will continue to find their way into the marketplace, solidifying the place of crane scales in the industry for years to come.

About the Author

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About Intercomp

Intercomp Company is an ISO 9001:2008 registered electronics manufacturer based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota with offices in the United States and the United Kingdom, proudly serving the Industrial, Racing, ITS/Enforcement, Aviation, Military, Agriculture and Mining and Aggregate industries worldwide.

For more information regarding any of the crane scales mentioned in this article or inquiries about how Intercomp may help you with an application in your industry, please contact Intercomp directly at 763-476-2531 or 800-328-3336 (USA), or Worldwide +1-763-476-2531. They can also be contacted through their website: www.IntercompCompany.com.

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Note: The cover of this piece depects only the contents that were published in the May/June issue of Industrial Weigh & Measure. For the purpose of this reprint the cover graphic was changed.