OVERHEAD CRANE UPKEEP
Save Big with Preventive Maintenance Programs

ALTERNATIVE MOVING METHODS
Preventive maintenance programs bring savings for crane owners.

**By Phil Bishop**

**Breakdown of a crane** can bring an industrial plant to a halt, and such interruptions to productivity can prove very expensive. However, breakdowns usually can be prevented by implementing a systemized maintenance program.

The current trend is to outsource overhead crane maintenance, which is driven by several factors. For one, plant owners are finding they do not have the expertise in-house; old cranes require increasingly more attention and their replacement parts become harder to source; and new cranes are more sophisticated than their predecessors, calling for new skills to maintain them that most likely involve the use of a laptop rather than a wrench.

Encouraging this trend are the major crane manufacturers that have identified maintenance services as a progressively more important business center. It helps flatten out the peaks and troughs of demand for new cranes and develop closer relations with customers. In 2006, crane servicing activities accounted for 32 percent of Konecranes’ global sales of around $2 billion. For its biggest competitor, Demag Cranes and Components, service activities comprised 27 percent of total world sales in fiscal 2006-2007.

According to Poirier, North American Industries’ CRISP program – Crane Repair, Inspection & Safety Partners – is tailored to meet the crane owner’s needs. Plans may include OSHA periodic safety inspections, preventive maintenance, repairs, safety training, load tests, recordkeeping, 24/7 hotline, spare parts, vendor-managed parts plans, and written records for files.

“The service options help customers address OSHA regulations, while saving them time and decreasing their costs,” she says. Poirier adds that regular inspection and maintenance will ensure peak efficiency throughout the crane’s life; address potential problems before they become more costly or inconvenient; reduce overhead costs associated with parts, lubricants, and tools; reduce downtime by scheduling when production will not be interrupted; and increase safety and reduce the chances of costly accidents, damage or injury.

“With OSHA requirements for regular inspections and the realization that a well-maintained crane saves time and money, a growing number of our customers are beginning to purchase our inspection and preventative maintenance package at the time they purchase new cranes,” she says.