

New construction tech debuts at Local 701's Canby facility

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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.