

COMPANY PROFILE

KOBELCO CRANES NORTH AMERICA, INC.

By Stephen Sisk



Houston, Texas-based Kobelco Cranes North America combines technology, build quality, and customer-centric focus, to offer the lowest cost of ownership in the crawler crane market.

Kobelco Cranes North America, Inc., owned by Kobelco Cranes Ltd. of Tokyo, Japan, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this fall. But the company's legacy in the construction machine industry dates back to 1905, when its parent company Kobe Steel introduced its first construction machine to the Japanese market.

Now, the North American operation serves as the OEM for the company's line of lattice-boom crawler cranes for the western hemisphere. Additionally, the office serves as a parts, service support, and warranty hub for dealers and owners.

"We specialize in the sales and support of crawler cranes only," said Greg Ballweg, general manager of Kobelco Cranes North America. "This single-focus allows us to concentrate our efforts on satisfying our dealers and customers, in a non-bureaucratic, quick response time method that customers appreciate."

Kobelco attributes its longevity in the industry to its ongoing commitment to improving its products to meet constantly growing and changing customer needs, demands, and expectations. The company draws on the support and feedback of long-time customers to support that function.

"Our factory product development team visits with our local customers on an annual basis," Ballweg said. "As a result, we are always gauging customer feedback to modify our existing product design if needed, or listening with a keen interest toward future product offerings."

The company views the greatest benefit that it could provide to a customer as the ability to provide a means for that customer to increase its operating profit. This means reducing overall costs without sacrificing quality or functionality.

Cost savings Kobelco offers its customers include:

- Efficiency: High reliability reduces downtime and lowers repair labor and parts costs.
- KCross: Telematic system at no charge to customers for remote monitoring of daily crane activity.
- Maintenance: Designed for easy maintenance, saving labor costs and reducing downtime.
- Transportation: Design features allow for easy assembly/disassembly, requiring fewer transport trucks, fuel, man hours, etc.

The company offers eight models to the North American market, encompassing a wide range of features to meet varying customer needs. Boom length and lifting capacity range from 85 tons and

200 feet (180 ft. + 60 ft., boom + jib; Model CK850G) to 600 tons and 413 feet (276 ft. + 276 ft., boom + jib; Model SL6000).

All of Kobelco's lattice-boom crawler cranes feature the following:

- Full-hydraulic operation with responsive, pressure-assisted controls
- New LMI 12" color touchscreen multi-display providing real-time machine conditions
- Electric twist-grip and traditional floor-mounted throttle controls
- Interim Tier 4 Compliant Hino direct-injected 6-cylinder engines, ranging from 285 to 429HP
- High-strength, all-welded, CAD-designed frames and carbodies
- Powerful, rated single-line pull winches increase hoisting speed and efficiency
- Three steering modes for efficient maneuverability due to independently driven travel motors
- Ease of assembly/disassembly; no assist crane needed

Specifically regarding wind energy, Ballweg said, Kobelco features a number of crawler cranes that are applicable for many industry functions.

"Whether they are smaller support cranes, or the larger SL6000, the Kobelco crawler cranes are well suited for wind energy applications. All Kobelco cranes feature quick assembly/disassembly capabilities, as well as consistent reliability and operator friendly characteristics," Ballweg said. "The learning curve is short for new operators in the seat of a Kobelco Crane. Powerful, high-torque travel capability is another desirable feature of Kobelco Cranes on wind farm construction sites. The 12-inch color touchscreen LMI displays a wealth of information to the operator in a simple and easy to understand format, which also adds to the operator's confidence."

Aside from the company's primary mission of customer satisfaction, Ballweg said it's the overall operation of Kobelco's crawler cranes that serves as the best tangible benefit to its customers.

"What differentiates Kobelco Cranes from the others is the consistent and reliable operational characteristics of these cranes," Ballweg said. "No single feature can be pointed to as best, but it's a combination of features that allows the operator to control the speed of the crane's functions, resulting in his high comfort factor and confidence level." ✈