

# Imperial Crane

*For more than four decades, Bridgeview, Illinois-based Imperial Crane Services, Inc. has valued safety above all else. After a positive reception at Windpower 2013, the company is now setting its sights on wind energy.*

By: Tim Byrd

**R**on Selby compares the multiple departments that comprise Imperial to the assorted components of a crane.

“There are a multitude of components required to put the cranes together, but a piece of the crane is just one part of the whole,” he said. “In the same way, our commitment to safety is just one component of our business. But it’s the most integral part.”

Safety is indeed a part of the culture at Imperial Crane Services, Inc. The company has not had a reportable accident in over six years, and it continues to provide safety trailers on all big project sites, as well as at its Bridgeview, Illinois home office. They provide training for pre-job hires (testing equipment, passing drug screens) all the way to rigging qualifications.

“It’s who we are. Every piece of equipment has ‘safety’ plastered all over it,” said Selby, the company’s sales director.

Imperial built a strong reputation for itself through more than four decades of experience in the manufacturing and heavy industries. The company offers a comprehensive portfolio of crane and heavy lift equipment rentals and sales, as well as managed operational services. Imperial employs 300 people in six locations stretching from Bridgeview to LaPorte, Texas.

Current projects are underway in 10 different states across the nation, and expand internationally into Columbia and Russia.

But despite its global influence, Imperial remains a homegrown business. Beginning in Chicago, John Bohne worked to build what has become one of the largest crane companies in the world. Today, his son B.J. leads Imperial Crane Services as president and CEO. Selby says Imperial’s recent decision to enter the wind market came from its experience at Windpower 2013.

“Back in May, when the show came through, we just threw up a booth to see what would happen at the show,” Selby said.

What happened was an enthusiastic response—which Selby attributes to Imperial’s international renown in the crane industry. “We found a lot of companies already wanting to do business with us at the show in Chicago. We’re as excited as everybody else about the opportunities in wind energy. We want to go out and capture them. It’s just a matter of us going out, promoting what we’ve done, and continuing to build on that. I think success is going to follow us.”

Imperial’s stellar safety record—with an impressively low EMR rating of 0.57—should prove to be another factor in industry response. “Our safety culture has

gotten us to where we are,” Selby said. “We work safely and provide current machinery with safe personnel.”

It helps when you’re sporting a newer fleet of machines, too. “We’re showing up with new equipment,” Selby said, “usually at a new site or a site where maintenance is being done within the first year. We do a tremendous amount of repeat business.”

Imperial’s sales team concentrates mainly on used equipment and distribution of that product throughout a given territory. “As you’re doing work around various parts of the country, you have to adapt to what the rates are across the country,” Selby said. “You have to have an ear to the ground to be able to be competitive. Somebody might be within a hundred miles, and we’re 500 miles away.”

One unique aspect of Imperial’s efforts to meet customer needs is its computerized, 3-D lift plan. With this technology, the company is able to give clients or potential clients precise visual representations of actual equipment and site conditions. Imperial can provide lift simulations from multiple angles, taking actual job-site conditions and obstructions into account.

“We offer customers a good design up-front,” Selby said. “Every crane we have goes into

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the computer, and we can actually show a customer how a lift is going to happen. If it involves air conditioning, vessels, turbines, or fans—whatever it is, we can incorporate that into our drawings to show them how our equipment is going to work in their work environment. If there's any doubt, when we're up against a competitor, we show them printed pictures of our equipment on their job site.”

When asked what sets Imperial apart from the competition, Selby cited a general commitment to excellence in all aspects of the company's operations.

“We are dedicated to the highest standards in safety, service, and quality,” Selby said. “That commitment shows through our remarkable customer service, our state-of-the-art technology, and the safest equipment and procedures anywhere in the world. By constantly updating our equipment and procedures, we aim to be the safest crane service company in the world. We are the recipient of numerous safety awards each year from accredited organizations such as American Subcontractors Association, Three Rivers Manufacturer's Association and Specialized Crane and Rigging Association.” ✎

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