

Purchasing rigging gear in 2006

Today's standards shine in comparison to "old days"

BY DENNIS ST. GERMAIN

The days when rigging gear was purchased with a series of phone calls to local suppliers to find the lowest price are long gone. Today, safety-conscious users who know the facts regarding ASME B30.9, ISO 9001-2000 quality, actual job costs, and the need for all encompassing service, make long-term commitments with value added fabricators.

In the new ASME B30.9 – 2003 American National Standard entitled "Slings," there are new requirements that sling users "shall be trained in the selection, inspection, cautions to personnel, effects of environment, and rigging practices." Contained in the standard are six chapters covering alloy chain slings, wire rope slings, metal mesh slings, synthetic rope slings, synthetic webbing slings, and synthetic round slings. Not specifically mentioned in this standard are many new technologically advanced products designed to lower workers' compensation claims, lower job costs, and create a safer work environment.

The training of end users to be in compliance with the new B30.9 – 2003 standard and to be aware of new advances in rigging gear must come from a qualified supplier or the user will have to make separate arrangements with an outside provider of these services. It is the user's responsibility to be sure their personnel are adequately educated in the selection, inspection, cautions, and rigging practices necessary to maintain job site safety. It is the user's responsibility to be sure their rigging gear is in compliance with the regulations expressed in the B30.9 – 2003 standard such as the requirement to maintain proper tagging on the sling products in use at their facility. It is the user's responsibility to make their workers aware of new technology that will lower overall job costs and result in a



more profitable business. It is the user's responsibility to be sure their supplier has access to the highest quality manufacturers of fittings, hoists, and supporting gear.

The purchase of rigging tools that is directly related to safety on the job can no longer be left to chance. In the "old days" when price was the only consideration, job site safety was more hope than actuality. Today, safety on the job is something that takes precedence over any other issue. It is a proven fact that the lowest cost job is the safest job. For this reason alone, the quality of rigging tools must be measurable and they must be made to a quality standard such as ISO 9001-2000. This program requires the fabricator of slings to have a written procedure for every product they manufacture and to follow this procedure in each of their facilities. All of their workers must be trained with these procedures so there is no chance products will be different if made on different days by different workers in different places. Without such a program, the end user has no measurable control over their rigging gear supplier except to send their own employees into each of their suppliers' facilities for ongoing quality audits — a very expensive program that adds to their rigging gear costs.

In the "old days" rigging gear was a commodity made from the same basic materials such as wire rope, chain, or webbing. All the buyer had to do was call five different fabricators with the same specifications like 12- 5/8" x 12' wire rope slings and ask, "What's your price?" Today, with an emphasis on safety, it is necessary to be concerned with the type of material, grade, sling strength, identification, matching lengths, material source, fabrication skills, testing availability, and compliance with standards. It is also important to be aware that commodity products in many applications have been replaced with tools that are technologically superior giving the end user longer service life, lower workers' compensation claims, higher productivity, lower job cost, lower storage and transportation costs, and happier workers at

the end of the day. In the past 20 years there have been greater advancements in rigging gear than in the previous 200 years. Commodity items have been replaced with specific tools engineered for job site safety and lower overall job cost.

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Service also adds great value to a purchaser when they can be assured the job will not be held up waiting for rigging gear. Many utility and manufacturing plants operate around the clock, and without 24-hour availability from a rigging supplier the chances of a plant shutdown or job interruption are great. Another service performed by quality

suppliers is that of rigging gear inspection. In plant and on site inspection by a fully trained and trusted provider shares the burden with the user and helps to maintain a foundation of safety. Repairs of defective gear can be performed during a down time when the product is not needed so it will be available when required. To facilitate service the supplier's product advisor is fully qualified to perform job site training of the users rigging personnel; they are qualified to perform jobsite inspection of rigging gear. They service the account in a truck to facilitate deliveries and pick-ups of defective gear for instant repair service. A fully trained and available service provider, knowledgeable about new technology and methods, is a great asset to any rigging gear purchaser.

In summary, the days when rigging gear was purchased by a series of phone calls to local suppliers to find the lowest commodity price are long gone. Today a knowledgeable buyer finds a rigging gear supplier that provides the four required traits:

- Knowledge of ASME B30.9 – 2003 and the ability to train workers to use and inspect rigging gear.
- A quality program like ISO 9001-2000 so all rigging gear is made to a written procedure each time and every time with adequate testing facilities and proof that the products perform to the standard.
- Knowledge and accessibility to new and innovative products that can save time and money for the user. Partnerships with quality manufacturers of fittings, hoists, and other supporting rigging tools.
- Service provided by a skilled product advisor 24/7. What's needed, when needed, where needed!

Chances are you can call five places for the lowest price but only one of those five places can provide adequate coverage of the four areas really necessary for the lowest cost safest work place. An educated buyer will know which of those five places is a value added fabricator with first class resources and will call them every time. **CW**