

## **The Raising Gang**

### **A Training Program Teaming Together Two Skilled Construction Trade Unions**

#### **What the innovation is.**

The Raising Gang project is a cooperative training program developed by a partnership among the Great Lakes Fabricators & Erectors Association; Local 25 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental & Reinforcing Iron Workers; and Local 324 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, to enhance the joint training of structural iron workers and operating engineers to work as a team in steel frame construction. The unique program may well be the first time ironworkers and operators have cooperated in joint training in structural steel erection, at least at this scale. Its centerpiece is a massive and complex training frame weighing approximately 150 tons, that can be erected in several different configurations. Following eight hours of classroom instruction, third year apprentices from both unions are trained by journeymen on steel erection techniques that are safe and productive. "On site" training occupies a full, 40 hour week, starting from the initial shakeout of the steel to its final topping out. The frame is then disassembled for the next class. As part of this effort a printed collection of best practices has been prepared for use in conjunction with apprenticeship training manuals.

#### **Where and when it originated.**

Planning of the Raising Gang project began in 2000 by the Labor-Management Committee of the GLFEA and Iron Workers Local 25. Operating Engineers Local 324 was approached in 2001 and volunteered the use of a portion of its Journeyman & Apprenticeship Training Fund (JATF) Education Center in Howell for erection of the training frame. Classroom space in the JATF is also provided to allow training to continue in inclement weather. The first column was erected for the very first time on May 6, 2002.

#### **Where it has been used, and is expected to be used in the future.**

While expectations are that the Raising Gang program will continue at the JATF for the foreseeable future, the frame could be moved to another location. More important, the entire program could be duplicated. In addition, the frame can be modified to provide training for a project owner's specialized steel erection needs. Planning is underway as well to adapt the training to a variety of other groups, including steel erection foremen, and in combination with several universities for architectural and engineering students.

#### **Why it is innovative.**

Here is a rare example where two skilled construction trade unions are working together to improve worker skill levels in a setting that emphasizes real project site conditions. Crane operators learn about the job responsibilities of iron workers and how they can harmonize with them, to enhance safety and productivity. Iron workers learn about the capabilities and limitations of cranes and the operators, in handling the challenges of setting structural steel. Both are given ample opportunities to perfect their skills under the guidance of seasoned instructors.

#### **What it changed or replaced.**

Prior to the Raising Gang program, crane operators and iron workers were trained separately. Iron Workers Local 25 had used a much smaller, 1-1/2 story frame made up of lightweight steel members about the size of a one car garage. The old frame is now being used as the framing of a penthouse that can be lifted onto a small portion of the new frame. Operating engineers had used cranes to lift and place some structural steel but they could not erect it into any kind of structure. Instead, they had to learn how to work together as a team while on actual project sites, under production conditions and deadlines that often were not conducive to comprehensive education. Nothing can replace on the job experience, but crane operators and iron workers who successfully complete the Raising Gang program will be far more qualified to safely and productively erect steel than those who do not.

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**Training with experienced journeymen**

**The Raising Gang Training Program**

A product of cooperation and partnership between the Great Lakes Fabricators & Erectors Association, Local 25 of the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers, and Local 324 of the International Union of Operating Engineers.



**Simulates project site conditions**



**Topping out the training frame**



**Old training frame (left) used as penthouse on new training frame**



**Joint training of iron workers and crane operators**