SHARP START

March 17 — “It’s Not Necessary”

While unloading a 12,000-lb transformer, the crane operator began setup without placing crane pads under the outriggers. When asked to scope in and install the pads, the operator responded that it wasn’t necessary.

When an customers representative arrived on site to sign the crane permit. I voiced my concern that there were no crane pads under the outriggers. He agreed and we both instructed the operator to install the pads.

A 12,000-pound transformer was being unloaded. The crane was positioned. The outriggers were extended. But crane pads were not placed beneath them.

Setup determines outcome.
Ground support is not optional.
If procedure says use pads, use pads.

When asked to correct it, the response was simple: “It’s not necessary.”

Outriggers distribute load into the ground. Pads increase surface area and reduce ground pressure. Without them, the crane’s stability depends entirely on soil condition and surface integrity. Ground can look solid and still shift under concentrated load.

Crane failures do not happen gradually. When ground gives way or stability is compromised, the load shifts instantly. Twelve thousand pounds does not pause while someone rethinks the setup.

This wasn’t a knowledge issue. Every qualified operator understands outrigger pads exist for a reason.

It was a judgment issue the moment confidence overrides procedure.

And steel doesn’t respect confidence.

Hazards

- Ground failure under outrigger
- Crane instability or tip-over
- Dropped load
- Crushing injury
- Fatal struck-by incident
- Severe equipment damage

Stats

- Crane-related incidents remain among the most severe in construction environments.
- Improper setup and ground condition failures are common contributing factors in crane tip-overs.
- Outrigger support and ground preparation are critical engineering controls.
- Many crane failures occur during setup not during complex lifts.

Humans at Work

Experience is a good thing. It builds skill. It builds confidence. But if we’re not careful, it also builds comfort. And comfort can quietly turn into complacency. When we’ve done something many times without a problem, certain steps start to feel unnecessary.

That’s where we have to pause. Not because we don’t know what we’re doing, but because we do. The more experienced we become, the more important it is to slow down and verify. Procedures aren’t there to question our ability. They’re there to back it up. Confidence is valuable. Complacency is expensive.

Pause and Think

Experience is valuable, but it should never replace verification. The moment we decide something is “probably fine” without confirming it, we’re no longer working within design. Instead, we’re working on assumption.

- Are you completing every required setup step, even when it feels repetitive?
- Are you verifying conditions, or just trusting what you see?
- Are you following procedure or just relying on confidence?