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New crane helps Gilbert complex rise

By Ed Taylor
Tribune



BIG HELP: A Manitowoc tower crane stands above the Sunrise Assisted Living center construction site in Gilbert.

Thomas Boggan Tribune

An unusual construction crane is helping to build a new assisted living complex in Gilbert. Called a self-erect tower crane, it looks much like the giant cranes that help create high-rise buildings, but it is being used on a smaller project that will have only three floors when completed.

The crane, designed in Europe, is unusual in that it is operated by remote control from the ground rather than from a cab high in the air. The arm, or jib, is long enough to cover the entire construction site, eliminating the need for forklifts to trundle heavy loads around the project.

The crane folds and unfolds quickly, making it cheaper and more portable than most tower cranes and eliminating the need for a large concrete foundation.

The crane can be transported from job to job on two tractor-trailer rigs - one for the folded-up crane and the other for the concrete counter-weights that provide stability at the base of the tower.

"A normal tower crane can cost \$40,000 to \$50,000 to put up," said Kelly Hadland, president of Gilbertbased Compass Equipment, owner of the crane. "This costs about \$4,000 to erect."

The technology is new to Arizona, he said. Compass Equipment purchased the crane in January, and the Sunrise Assisted Living complex on Gilbert Road between Elliot and Warner roads is only the second job site where Hadland has used the equipment. A similar but not identical crane is operated by a homebuilder to construct custom-home projects in north Scottsdale, he said.

The crane is manufactured by Potain, a French subsidiary of Wisconsin-based Manitowoc Crane Group. The design is used extensively in Europe and some U.S. locales such as California and Minnesota where local equipment companies have promoted it, Hadland said.

"I felt this product had potential here if it was marketed," he said.

Hadland is so certain Potain cranes will receive a warm response from Arizona contractors that he has ordered six more of various sizes. The crane works best in tight job sites where there's not a lot of room for forklifts or mobile cranes to maneuver, he said.

Dave Petersen, owner of Mesa-based Sun West Builders, a framing subcontractor that rented the crane for the Gilbert project, thinks it has "great possibilities." His 18-year-old son, Jake, has been operating it at the Gilbert construction site. "For him, it's as easy as running a remote-controlled car."



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