

Mark Wright Training Limited

Information Pack 2010

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The Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA)

The Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA) was formed in the late 1980's , as the result of an initiative by a number of leading companies involved in industrial rope access techniques, to provide a safe working environment for the industry. Its formation was supported by the UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

Safety is paramount in our industry. Since its formation IRATA International, as it is now known, and its member companies, have worked assiduously to improve safety in the industry, produce an industry standard set of guidelines and training requirements and provide a comprehensive assessment and registration process for operatives.

Much of this work has been carried in close liaison with the HSE. This has created an effective framework within which, in the decade that IRATA has been collecting safety statistics, there have been NO major or fatal accidents amongst its members. The incident rate for members is consistently well below that of other industries during the same period. Rope access provides an effective, efficient and economic means of access. However it must be carried out in a proficient and safe manner.

IRATA International's main activities are to:

- Promote and maintain a high standard of industrial rope access activities in terms of safety and work quality.
- Provide guidance on training and certification of personnel involved in Industrial Rope Access.
- Produce publications and guidance on good working practice, training and other related topics.
- Prepare submission and provide informed opinion and advice to government departments and others on matters concerning health, safety and training.
- Assist working parties charged with commenting on and discussing existing and draft legislation and directives.
- Assist in the provision of appropriate educational training and certification opportunities for personnel employed in Industrial Rope Access.
- Provide a forum for the free and informal exchange of experience and opinion.

IRATA Certification Scheme

The IRATA Certification scheme is a 3 tier system. Candidates with no previous experience will be required to carry out an IRATA Level 1 course. The qualification has a validity of 3 years. Once qualified, technicians are required to work under the supervision of an IRATA Level 3 Safety Supervisor.

As soon as technicians have gained a minimum of 1000 hours of varied industrial rope access experience over a minimum period of 12 months they will be eligible to carry out an IRATA Level 2 course. This 5 day course refreshes candidates in the basic techniques and covers the additional rigging and rescue techniques required for a rope access Lead Technician.

A further 1000 hours of varied industrial rope access experience over a further 12 months and technicians may be ready to carry out a 5 day IRATA Level 3 Safety Supervisor course. Once qualified you could be responsible for any rope access worksite. Level 3 technicians are required to hold a suitable First Aid qualification.

Once qualified as an IRATA Level 3, technicians may then work as an assistant IRATA rope access instructor and follow the IRATA requirements to become a fully qualified IRATA Level 3 Instructor.

Once qualified as an IRATA Level 3 Instructor and have been qualified as an IRATA Level 3 for a minimum of 6 years, technicians may then apply to become an IRATA Assessor.

Work Prospects

The rope access industry is continuing to expand worldwide, in all sectors. Some of the Worlds' leading Architects are designing buildings to be maintained by a combination of state of the art cradle systems and rope access techniques.

The skylines of most of the Worlds' big cities such as Dubai are a rope access paradise with the largest building in the world already having rope access teams working on its cleaning and maintenance.

You could get the opportunity to work on some of the most prestigious and iconic structures in the world and compiling an enviable photo cv.

Construction Industry

The UK construction industry is very varied and the types of work you could be undertaking is vast. The work tends to be less specialized as in the offshore industry and as such is less trade skill orientated. Many of our candidates are regularly gaining employment in the industry with no additional qualifications to the IRATA Level 1 certificate.

Most UK building sites under the management of an MCG (Major Contractors Group) member will require all operatives to hold a CSCS (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) card. This requires you to pass a touch screen safety test which should include the 'work at height' element. Contact www.cscs.uk.com for information relating to this qualification.

There are a number of additional qualifications which would enhance your position which are not so costly.

Holding a Mobile Elevating Work Platform (MEWP) (Cherry Picker) qualification for Scissor lifts and Booms is very useful. Contact www.ipaf.org for information relating to these qualifications

A qualification for the installation of Safety Nets is another useful one to have if you wish to install nets. Some of these systems are rigged in tension to allow workers to walk on the nets whilst protected by a secondary rope system. Contact www.faset.org.uk for information relating to these qualifications.

Many buildings require window cleaners to be protected whilst cleaning high level windows and there are a large variety of permanent fall prevention systems being installed. Some of these systems are continuous cable systems and others, safety harness eyebolts. An increasing number of buildings are also being installed with rope access anchorage bolts and so a qualification in the installation of EN 795 anchor bolts would also be useful. These courses would also cover the requirements for testing. Contact www.industrial-rope-access.co.uk for information relating to these qualifications.

Under the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) and the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations (PPE), all rope access equipment requires a detailed examination at regular intervals. These examinations are generally carried out every 6 months by a competent person. Holding a suitable PPE Examination qualification would be very useful. Contact www.lyon.co.uk for information relating to these qualifications

A lot of work is carried out inside 'Confined Spaces' and as such holding a suitable qualification would be an advantage. Contact www.minesrescue.com for information relating to these qualifications.

Where further specialized training is a requirement then your employing company will generally arrange this.

2012 Olympics

Construction work is well underway for the 2012 Olympics. A number of rope access projects have already started on some of the Olympic stadiums and over the coming months and years more and more rope access teams will be seen on almost every site. It is at the final stages of construction where our access techniques mostly come into play.

The installation of structural steel & cladding, fabric roofing, electrical wiring, safety systems and fire deluge systems are just a handful of work options that could be open to you as well as painting and cleaning.

The work will not just be based in London. All of the UK's major cities which have state of the art sporting facilities will be used as training grounds throughout the event. These are already being upgraded and the coming years will see rope access teams working on some of the most interesting structures in the country.

Geotechnical

Many of you will have seen large expanses of mesh hung down the sides of railway and motorway embankments. These will, more than likely, have been installed using rope access methods. The mesh is to hold back often 1000's of kg. of loose rocks.

For many years into the future the cliffs of Gibraltar will continue to be systematically stabilized using some of the most complex suspended drilling systems ever deployed. It is on these cliffs that many of the countries leading geotechnical companies have honed their trades.

The work is hard and during the summer months the long hours can take its toll on the unfit.

The work, however, is some of the most satisfying. Many recent projects have been upwards of 12 months duration. The workforce often live 'on-site' in caravans and mobile homes, often with some fantastic coastal views to greet you every morning.

Much of the work is on the UK rail network and as such you would be required to carry out a medical. The medical is mandatory and has strict health and fitness requirements as well as a strict alcohol and drugs policy. You would then need to carry out a Personal Track Safety (PTS) course, whilst being sponsored by an approved company. Contact www.mtrgroup.com for information relating to these qualifications. Your employing company would generally put you through this qualification.

Windfarms

The number of windfarms is growing at an astonishing rate. These are being built both on and offshore and much of the maintenance work is carried out using rope access methods. This should keep regular rope access teams in employment for the foreseeable future.

Window Cleaning

The amount of glass being used in the construction industry is increasing. The famous Swiss Re building 'The Gherkin', in London being a classic example. The top sloping section of the building was installed by rope access methods.

Windows will always need cleaning and if you don't want to actually clean them you could be using rope access techniques to install the permanent cradle systems that allow others to clean them.

Offshore North Sea

Whilst the North Sea oil reserves are nearing depletion there is currently an unprecedented amount of maintenance work being carried out on our aging fleet of offshore oil and gas installations. In many cases bringing them up to current regulations prior to decommissioning. These are upwards of 5 year projects.

The days of the offshore 'Roustabout' are pretty much gone. These days the workforce is made up of fully qualified technicians. In order to gain employment in the offshore industry as a rope access technician, you would need to specialize in a particular field.

There is a reasonable amount of work for rope access electricians with suitable Ex. electrical qualifications. Contact www.met-uk.com for information relating to these qualifications.

There is a constant requirement for offshore oil and gas installations to have a suitable and sufficient protective coating and to this end the North Sea summer months see rope access teams blasting and spraying the installation jackets from top to water.

Learning how to blast and spray on the end of a rope is not the easiest technique to master and specialist training should be carried out before considering this field. Contact www.opito.com for information relating to these qualifications.

Many of the large decommissioning projects currently underway require large scale lifting operations to be carried out by the rope access technicians. Contact www.opito.com for information relating to relevant offshore 'lifting and slinging' qualifications.

Non Destructive Testing (NDT) is the most popular field for industrial rope access. It allows suitably qualified technicians to carry out essential thickness gauging of steel plate and pipe. It allows detailed examinations of welds by way of a number of different techniques including Magnetic Particle / Penetrant, Radiography and Paint inspection. Contact www.ruanetpo.com for information relating to these qualifications.

Rope Access Technicians considering this line of work should seriously consider gaining ALL the NDT qualifications in order to stand out above the rest.

Ensure you also gain the offshore survival qualification which covers ALL of the North Sea and not just the UK sector. Contact www.hota.org for information relating to these qualifications.

It would be worth having a United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association (UKOOA) medical before you embark on any training for the offshore industry. The medical is mandatory and has strict health and fitness requirements as well as a strict alcohol and drugs policy. Contact www.ukooa.co.uk for information relating to this medical.

NOTE: Ensure the rope access industry is for you by attending an IRATA course prior to investing many £1,000's in NDT and offshore survival qualifications. Nearly all NDT works carried out offshore is by rope access teams.

Offshore Worldwide

The offshore industry around the world is as busy as the North Sea. Choosing one of the specialist trades mentioned above and gaining the necessary qualifications will allow you to travel all over the world.

Ship Inspections

The worlds 'Supertanker' oil cargo fleet requires regular NDT inspections. These are mostly carried out whilst the ship's are in transit typically between Singapore and Dubai. Rope access teams would board the vessels after crude oil unloading and carry out the inspections of the insides of the tanks from ropes, in transit, before departing again after the surveys have been completed.

An increasing number of bulk carriers and container ships are inspected in the same way.

Current Financial Climate

I don't need to tell you about the current financial crisis around the world. The construction industry is only just starting to get back on its feet. The type of work that is currently being carried out using rope access techniques is very varied and we are finding that most companies are diversifying sufficiently to maintain growth.

Feed-back from recent former students suggests that there is plenty of work out there and so long as you make yourself as employable as possible you should have no problem finding employment.

Employment Status & Remuneration

When starting off in the 'on-shore' rope access industry you should be registered as 'self employed'. You are very likely to be working for a number of different companies in order to gain sufficient, varied experience to enable you to move through the IRATA certification scheme. This will also allow you to find your own preferred industry sector.

Good Level 1's can earn around £100.00 per day with overnight expenses at around £30.00 per night. Some companies also pay travelling expenses. I know of a number of our recently qualified Level 1 technicians who were earning £150.00 per day however this should not be considered the norm.

Being 'self employed' brings with it certain responsibilities. You will be responsible for keeping your own business accounts, paying your required NI contributions and making your annual personal tax payments. It would be worth securing the services of an accountant or suitably qualified book keeper to help with your tax returns.

Occasionally you may work on a 'priced' job. Your team will agree a set fee with the rope access company for carrying out a particular contract and if it is completed to the total satisfaction of the company and you have finished the job ahead of time then you would be paid the total fee. On many occasions, with a good team, it is sometimes possible to almost double your normal daily rate.

It must be pointed out however, that if the contract goes over your estimated time then your earnings could be considerably less than your normal daily rate and if the works were done to an unsatisfactory standard and had to be re-done then you could end up owing the company money. Suitable insurance should be purchased if taking on this type of work.

An increasing number of the larger companies are taking on staff on a 'per contract' basis. Under this type of employment your NI and Tax contributions are deducted at source which means your take home pay will be approximately 30% less than your top line. It is likely at the end of the financial year that you will be entitled to a Tax rebate. Your accountant or book keeper will again be able to help reduce your Tax burden and thus the size of any rebate that may be due.

As soon as the job is completed, your contract will end. You will then be free to work for another company, or you will be given a further contract.

The off-shore industry works in a similar way.

Rates of pay in the off-shore industry are fairly standardized based on your particular trade qualifications but are considerably more than the on-shore industry. A working day is 12 hours and you would often be working 2 – 3 weeks on and 2 -3 weeks off although there are a number of variations on the rota systems in operation. You are not generally paid during your leave time however some companies do pay a small retainer for senior technicians. For Taxation reasons, many offshore workers set themselves up as a 'Limited Company' requiring them to hold suitable insurance. You should contact your accountant for more information on this type of employment status.

Rope Access Equipment

If you are to make yourself as employable in as many markets as possible it would be worth having your own equipment. We supply a comprehensive set of the most modern equipment at a significantly discounted price to current and former students of £850.00 Inc. Vat. however I would not advise anyone to rush out and spend that sort of money straight away.

Your first job could be for one of the larger contracting companies and all your personal rope access equipment is generally supplied.

We always carry a large stock of a wide range of height safety equipment and I can usually get the equipment out to you the next working day if you secure a contract that requires you to supply your own equipment.

Ropes and general rigging equipment is normally supplied by the employing company.

About Your IRATA Course

All IRATA Level 1 courses are 5 day events. Mark Wright, the current IRATA Training Committee Chairman, IRATA Level 3 Instructor and Training Assessor, will first introduce you to the industry, the course objectives and discuss both employer and employee responsibilities under current UK industry law. You will also receive comprehensive education in current 'work at height' industry Regulations.

You will receive a number of IRATA documents at the commencement of the course together with a copy of the most comprehensive industrial rope access manual currently available.

In the afternoon Liam Wright (IRATA Level 3 Instructor) and Dave Cowley (IRATA Level 3 Instructor and Training Assessor) will introduce you to the most up to date equipment currently available and detail the methods of inspection and maintenance. They will then get you started on the most basic rope techniques. The rest of the week is predominantly practical in nature as you progress through the more advanced techniques whilst gaining a gradual exposure to height as you become more familiar with your equipment. Thursday afternoon generally culminates with an unassisted, controlled descent from the top of the 30m high Magna Tower, the largest and most exposed lattice type rope access training structure in the UK. Experience has shown that many operators favour new technicians who have been exposed to these sorts of structure and these heights during their training.

The final day of the course consists of an independent IRATA Assessment where your retained knowledge will be tested against a rigid criteria to ensure that you are able to perform the required techniques, in the way they have been taught, in a safe and efficient manner. There will always be an instructor on hand during the assessment to ensure that a safe and fair assessment is taking place. The emphasis at IRATA Level 1 is on safety and not speed.

The work and, in particular, the IRATA Level 1 course can be very strenuous and prospective candidates should ensure they have sufficient levels of physical fitness and stamina before booking onto a course. Over the course of the week you will physically climb up almost 0.5km of rope using your own body strength. If you do not take part in any physical pastimes it may be worth considering attending a gym or doing some running prior to the commencement of your course.

IRATA mandates a maximum Candidate / Instructor ratio of 6:1 covering all IRATA Levels, to ensure our candidates receive the best chance of success at assessment, we have a dedicated Level 1 Instructor and a dedicated Level 2/3 Instructor and generally operate well within this maximum ratio.

During your course you will be given valuable advice on the preparation of a CV and offered advice on gaining your first employment. Introductions may also be made to suitable candidates.

As a totally dedicated, independent training provider we carry out training for some of the larger operating companies. When these companies are recruiting we are often their first port of call. We consistently have success in finding work for many of our students.

The entire training team are dedicated and passionate about their industry and will ensure that you have an enjoyable, educational and above all, safe industrial rope access training course.

Over the last 5 years at our base at the Magna Tower we have seen candidates from every continent. The high number of returning Revalidation, Level 2 and Level 3 course candidates is testament to our high quality of training and after sales service.

Course Dates

IRATA courses are run Monday to Friday, every week unless there is a UK bank holiday in the week.

External Funding

The current financial recession is leading to large amounts of funding in the form of grants being available for retraining. Money is available to both individuals and companies with amounts varying dependent upon particular circumstances and geographical location.

It is not possible for us to arrange such grants as they often involve a number of different funding agencies.

You should first contact your local jobcentre to find out what is available in your own area. For further information on educational funding contact the Learning and Skills Council at www.lsc.gov.uk.

You should arrange any such funding prior to making a course booking.

What Next?

Once you have read through this information pack and are still keen then it would be worth doing some further research into the industry. This can be done by visiting the IRATA website, www.irata.org. This has a list of every member company and by visiting their websites will help you decide whether the industry is for you.

Visit www.rigg-access.com for similar information to the above. This site has many of the non IRATA members advertising on it.

If the industry is still for you then just give Mark Wright a call on 07793 114 105 to book a course.

IRATA Level 1 courses cost £725.00 Inc. Vat. (£617.02 Exc. Vat). A non refundable £100.00 deposit is required to confirm your place on the course with the balance of course fees being due at the commencement of training.

Payment of the deposit should be by debit/credit card. Bank transfers, cash and cheques are also accepted.

A course confirmation pack will then be sent out detailing everything you need to know about the course together with details of how to find us and local accommodation. You will need to arrange your own accommodation for the duration of the course.

Corporate Customers

Offering a rope access capability does not have to be as daunting as it might first appear. The initial Risk Assessment and Method Statement must be carried out by a competent person. There must be an IRATA Level 3 Safety Supervisor and all the equipment used must be regularly inspected by a competent person.

After getting your competent staff members through the initial IRATA Level 1 qualification, we can supply all of your rope access equipment and carry out the required examinations.

We can identify and provide all of the additional training requirements for your office staff to enable you to plan your rope access works in a safe manner.

We can supply suitably competent IRATA Level 3 Safety Supervisors until such time as your operating staff have progressed through the IRATA Certification scheme and you are totally self sufficient.

Many companies setting out in the rope access industry have, in the past, opted for non IRATA rope access training. In the long term this is a false economy. With sufficient work, a company can become completely self sufficient in their rope access capability in just over 2 years. By utilising our services we can make your entry into the industry as easy and as cost effective as possible.

Give Mark Wright a call on 07793 114 105 to discuss your specific requirements.