



Two People Can Handle Large Stone Pieces with Less Risk of Injury

Industry:
Stone

Product:
Fabricated stone countertops

The Problem:
Maneuvering heavy pieces through fabrication was done by hand

The Solution:
Free Standing Work Station Crane with an Aluminum Bridge



“Employees appreciate that they no longer have to push heavy stones around all day. That has helped recruit and retain good employees”

Some time ago, Keith Rose at West Central Granite & Marble Works in the Tampa Bay area decided to invest in a Free Standing, Gorbels® Workstation Crane.

Today, that decision has left him with one regret: “I wish I had purchased it a long time ago,” he said. “I didn’t realize just how many extra benefits that crane was going to provide.”

Rose is the president at West Central Granite, which fabricates and installs high quality, natural stone and engineered quartz countertops. Since the Gorbels® crane has been in place, he has seen definite improvements in safety, productivity, and employee attitude.

“In our business,” Rose said, “we fabricate custom shaped countertops from stone slabs. A small stone countertop may weigh 80 to 100 pounds. A large one can weigh as much as 1,000 pounds.”

Before installation of the crane – which roughly coincided with installation of a computer numerical control (CNC) stone center that cuts the stone and profiles its edges – maneuvering the heavy pieces through the fabrication stages was done by hand.

“We’d place a large slab on a dolly, balance it as best we could, and physically move it from the saw,” Rose said. “Usually, it took four men to accomplish that. The procedure would bring the shop to a standstill.

“With the Gorbels® crane, however, two people can easily handle a piece of stone, and there’s far less risk of injury. Our employees used to have more strained backs and other physical problems, and safety was a much greater concern.”

According to Rose, even the largest pieces to come through the shop can be handled by two people with



the crane. “Let’s say we are custom-cutting a countertop for a 10-foot by 5-foot kitchen island,” he said. “That stone might easily weigh half a ton. First, we would cut it into large square blank. Then, using the crane, we’d move the rough cut slab to our CNC machine, where they would be custom-cut to the islands specifications.”

The people who do the actual fabricating are the ones who maneuver the stone into place, Rose said. “That has helped productivity, because we no longer need people whose only job is to move the stone and the employees really appreciate that they no longer have to push heavy stones around all day.

In fact, that has helped us to recruit and retain good employees.”

When it comes to handling the largest stones, the Gorbels® crane has provided another benefit, Rose said. “Before, when we used to move extra large pieces that were too big for the hand dolly, we’d actually drive a forklift carrying the stone through the interior of the shop,”

he said. “We had to take time to clear a path for the forklift. Then it would drive past computers and other equipment in very tight quarters. It was a dangerous situation. With the crane, we’ve eliminated the need for that maneuver.”

Rose believes his particular industry has been a bit slow to begin using cranes. “I’ve been in this business for 22 years,” he said, “and I’m not aware of many stone-cutting operations in our area that use these types of cranes.

“But, I’m certainly glad we began using one. It works perfectly, and it has been a great investment.”