NEWS RELEASE

December 8, 2015



**Six Potain cranes building world’s largest fusion energy facility**

Potain tower cranes are building one of the world’s largest experimental nuclear fusion reactors at a huge site in the South of France. Built from stainless steel sections which have thicknesses ranging from 50 mm to 250 mm, the ITER fusion reactor will house the systems necessary for the operation of the ITER Tokamak device. The Tokamak complex is where the nuclear power will be generated. It consists of a seven-story concrete building measuring 120 m long and 80 m wide. There will be 16,000 t of rebar, 150,000 m³ of concrete and 7,500 t of steel in the structure.

The six Potain cranes working on the €300 million project include two topless tower cranes – an MDT 308 and an MDT 368 – and four traditional top-slewing tower cranes, the MD 610 M40, MD 485 B, MD 560 B and the MD 175. The cranes were supplied new to Dodin Campenon Bernard, a subsidiary of contracting giant Vinci Construction, which is managing all lifting work on site. Overall construction management is being handled by the VFR Group, a consortium made up of Vinci, Ferrovial and Razel Bec.

Laurent Moustraire, plant manager at Dodin Campenon Bernard, said the cranes are handling a succession of difficult lifts as components for the Tokamak are joined together. “For this extremely important job we needed to be certain that we were working with a professional and reliable crane provider,” he said. “Manitowoc was chosen because the team in charge of this specific project has been with us since the beginning of the tender. They fully understood the scope of what needs to be done and the constraints involved – so they were able to offer cranes specifically designed to meet our needs. Also, the presence of a Manitowoc Crane Care facility in the area was reassuring and an important factor in our final decision.”

Manitowoc’s Lift Solutions division, which provides specialist engineering support to customers, was closely involved in the crane planning and installation on the project. The structure’s unique design and complex construction process meant that a range of crane capacities were required. Pascal Ducrot, director of Lift Solutions, said the cranes were selected not only for their capabilities but also for their proven reliability and performance on countless other job sites. “Building an experimental facility, which is the first of its kind, obviously means that we are undertaking something which has never been done before,” he said. “Because of this, the contractor wanted to minimize the amount of unknown factors on the project, so it was important that the cranes had proven their capabilities in real world situations. Potain is the world’s leading tower crane brand and all the models chosen for the ITER job have long, successful track records. This fusion facility is highly ambitious and the climate and sensitive working conditions will test the cranes – but we are confident in their capabilities and so is the customer.”

The cranes were delivered at the end of 2014 and are expected to be on the job for at least five years. Because of the complexity of the project, the erection of the cranes took six months to complete. All were mounted on large mast sections to ensure optimum lift capability.

The Potain cranes are currently working long shifts, handling the assembly of over one million components which will be used in the Tokamak device – and which are fabricated by suppliers from all around the world. Manitowoc has ensured that Crane Care service crews visit the job site regularly.

Jean-Claude Guiter, key accounts director at Manitowoc, managed the supply contract for the cranes and explained why the company was chosen to carry out the work on this unique project. “Manitowoc had a cooperative and proactive approach to managing this project,” he said. “Our client appreciated the ongoing communication we provided and, combined with our technical and service support, it gave them the confidence to select Potain cranes for this contract.”

The 12 t capacity MDT 308 has been fitted with a 35 m jib and is working at a height of 51 m. For the MDT 368, which has a maximum capacity of 16 t, jib length is 55 m and working height is 81 m. The MD 610 M40 is the largest crane on the project, it has a 40 t maximum capacity, its jib is configured at 65 m in length and it has been erected to a working height of 77 m. The MD 485 B has a maximum capacity of 20 t, it is working with a 60 m jib at a working height of 75 m. For the 25 t capacity MD 560 B, jib length is 55 m and working height is 64 m. The MD 175 B has a maximum capacity of 8 t, jib length is 35 m and its working height is 28 m.

The ITER project is designed to demonstrate the large-scale production of electrical power and the self-sufficiency of tritium fuel. Made up of 39 buildings covering an area of 42 hectares, the facility is set to be the world’s biggest energy research project.

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