

# Does ETCP Certification make sense for installers?

IN THE PAST YEAR, we have heard more and more about ETCP and that is a very good thing. Within that timeframe, Peerbolte Creative started writing rigging installation specifications that required the use of an ETCP Certified Rigger on projects that contained counterweight systems, powered and power assisted systems, and fire curtains. As of January 2009, we have expanded this practice to include curtains and curtain track as well as tension grids. This addition to our specifications has led to some resistance from the building community; most notably from general contractors and installers. In the beginning, architects were a little concerned as to why we were requiring certifications for riggers. After learning that ESTA initiated the program, seeing those organizations and businesses that sit on the ETCP Council and realizing that the purpose of the exams was to create a safer workplace, they agreed with the addition.

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ETCP has created some tools that are extremely useful in communicating the nuts and bolts of the program. The posters and the web site allow us to convey the benefits of ETCP. We are able to share them with members of the design team, architects, and engineers, and they are able to see for themselves what is required to be a certified technician. The posters list the content outlines of each exam, and this paints a very clear picture of the knowledge and experience it would take to pass this exam. We have received positive responses from prospective members of our team.

Peerbolte Creative’s founder and principle, David Peerbolte has been a proponent of a unified industry certification for theatrical riggers since its inception. As a retired educator, David sees the value of the certification process because it fosters safety, “As a firm, we are currently engaged in the ETCP certification process.

We do not install equipment, but as designers, the certification is just as important,” reported David.

General Contractors have proved the most challenging group to convince that ETCP certification is a positive move forward. Most

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have viewed this requirement as a hindrance to the construction process. We have assured these general contractors that using ETCP Certified Riggers on the project will bring a high level of quality to the construction process because it will surely increase workplace safety and expertise. Hiring riggers who have proven through the certification process that they know what they are doing is a money saver. As consultants, we work with a variety of clients that will have their equipment installed by these firms. We have always felt that safety and proper installation should be the primary concern.

Still, the general contractors argue there are not enough certified riggers, which is why we allowed time for rigging companies to get their employees certified. Peerbolte Creative has known it would take a while for the ETCP Certification to take hold and for installers to get certified. “Not wanting to cause any hardships we decided to allow a grace period for installers to become certified. In that time, we encouraged them to pursue certification and informed them we were going to require it as part of the contract documents. That time has passed and we now require ETCP rigging certification,” said David. “We have created a similar grace period for ETCP electricians, but are not going to wait as long to require certification. Everyone should be familiar with the ETCP certification process and we feel it should be normal practice, just as building codes and other standards.”

“It is amazing the varied quality of work we have witnessed on the

job sites,” says Carl Hutcherson, Technology Consultant for Peerbolte Creative. “Over time, requiring certification should increase the competency of the project installer and managers.” Projects we designed that were installed with an ETCP certified technician at the helm have resulted in cleaner installs; it seems that there is a more established line of communication and leadership. Our visits to the job sites throughout the installation demonstrate a much more efficient process because we now see that work is being checked and verified. With this attention to detail, our punch list items have become shorter and shorter.



**Shannon Johnson** is a facility programming consultant for Peerbolte Creative, which provides theatrical technology consultation for theatres, auditoria, and worship centers. Shannon has taught in higher education, worked as a professional designer and technical director, and continues to lecture at the University of Central Missouri.

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Some companies don't know how to find ETCP technicians for their projects. Our business is mostly concentrated in the Central time zone, so when we are asked for a pre-approved bidder list, we first go to the ETCP web site and see if there are any certified technicians in the area as local contractors are sometimes preferred by the client. Next, we turn to ESTA members in the area to see if they are ETCP Recognized Employers or if they have certified technicians on staff. We prefer recommending ESTA members because of the Code of Conduct that we all agree to follow. Currently there are approximately 100 certified technicians in the Central time zone with half of those spread from Illinois through Texas.

Our hope is that more installers see the value in certification and that general contractors understand that certification helps to run a tighter ship; mistakes cost more money than getting it right the first time. We encourage firms that install rigging or lighting systems to be proactive and get their personnel certified. The safety of your workers and the safety of the future users are certainly worth the effort to participate in this program. ■

**The  
ETCP Certification Council  
proudly welcomes**



**and**



We welcome you to the Council as ETCP enters the next phase of its growth. We are pleased to add your voices to the leadership of this industrywide effort to promote safety, improve practice and recognize our industry's most qualified entertainment technicians.

**ETCP Certification Council**

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