

BY JR CASSIDY WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM  
ED KISH AND JOSHUA DOANE

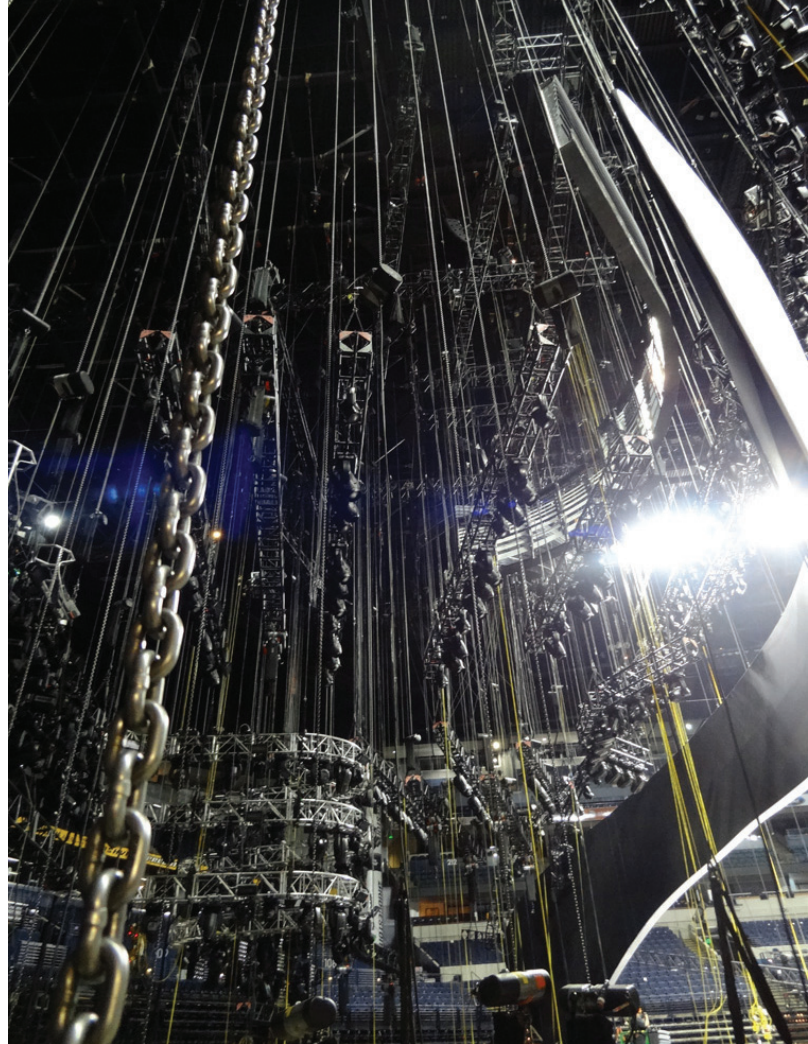
# ETCP Certification: The foundation for building a robust rigging safety program

KISH RIGGING INC. was founded in 1985 with one employee. Here we are 37 years later with 50 full-time employees who show up every day with a great attitude and a deep desire to advance safety in our industry at large. In 2008, Kish Rigging officially became an ETCP Recognized Employer, and currently we are the largest employer of full-time ETCP certified riggers.

“Getting initiated into the “ETCP Club” is certainly a badge of honor that garners respect within our group of riggers.”

Since day one, safety has been of utmost importance at Kish Rigging. In 2005, we welcomed the introduction of the ETCP program, which marked a positive turn towards engineering-based rigging knowledge and training, because in order to pass the certification exam, riggers needed to learn the fundamental concepts and formulas along with memorized facts regarding rigging equipment specs and applications commonly used in the field of entertainment rigging. Currently, there are four ETCP Certifications available: Rigger – Arena, Rigger – Theatre, Entertainment Electrician, and Portable Power Distribution Technician.

As a company, we immediately got on board and required that all our full-time production riggers be ETCP certified in arena rigging. A few of our production riggers have doubled down and have obtained a theatre rigging certification as well. We then focused on making sure all of our freelance riggers were certified. Once we'd achieved this baseline, we started providing in-house training for our younger shop employees. Those that invested time and effort became ETCP certified, and now they regularly work onsite with seasoned riggers, gaining valuable experience and the bonus of additional income.



Overhead rigging in an arena, assembled by Kish Rigging.

To help achieve ETCP Certification, we offer tutoring in basic engineering, taught by our in-house structural engineer, and a Rigging Power and Control training session, taught by our in-house power and control expert. Getting initiated into the “ETCP Club” is certainly a badge of honor that garners respect within our group of riggers. We remain committed to incentivizing and training the next generation of production riggers to grow our company and ensure safety in the future.

We recognize the contributions of the people in our industry that worked hard to start the ETCP and those that have continued the work. In particular, we acknowledge the effort and dedication of Rocky Paulson who worked tirelessly to educate riggers and promote certification. Along these same lines, individuals within our company have served as ETCP Subject Matter Experts, helping to create the ETCP Rigger and ETCP Entertainment Electrician exams.

These days, a successful rigging career in our industry requires education along with OSHA and ETCP Certification. More clients, venues, and IA Locals are requiring vendors and employees to become certified.

Some of the first adopters of the certification program were:

- The Los Angeles Convention Center, which in 2008 was the first major west coast facility to require ETCP Certification for all rigging supervisors.



- The San Diego Convention Center, which in 2009 began requiring ETCP-certified rigging supervisors.

Training and certification broaden your employment opportunities. The expression “the more you know, the more you are worth” is as true now as “you are only as good as your last gig.”

“Training and certification broaden your employment opportunities.”

Since our early commitment to the ETCP, we have greatly expanded our in-house training courses. Our specialized Authorized Rescue Training course (ART) provides our staff with the knowledge and ability to quickly execute a potentially lifesaving rescue at height in case of a fall, whether from a suspended truss, a vertical or horizontal lifeline, or directly from a venue or studio grid.

Our ART course is conducted every year, taught by our certified in-house Safety Manager/Trainer, Joshua Doane. The day-long course starts with a morning classroom session to review written material, OSHA updates, and procedural training in likely rescue scenarios. The afternoon session includes the inspection of everyone’s personal rigging equipment, and hands-on rescue exercises that simulate potential rescue scenarios. The ART program also includes a mid-year refresher course to keep the procedures, techniques, and muscle memory fresh. As a result of the ART program, we have trained rescue personnel on all of our projects.

Knowing that training coupled with awareness reduces accidents, we also provide the following:

- Hoist Repair and Maintenance training for in-house mechanics
- Mobile Elevating Work Platforms (MEWP) training for our personnel that operate such equipment
- MEWP Supervisor training for our onsite supervisors
- Forklift Operator training
- Rigging Hardware Inspector training for shop specialists
- OSHA 10-Hour course for warehouse employees
- OSHA 30-Hour course for supervisors and project managers
- Competent Person Fall Protection training for onsite personnel
- Program Administrator training for our safety manager
- “Train the Trainer” training for in-house instructors

Looking forward, we now see that government entities are beginning to mandate ETCP Certification. California Assembly Bill 1775 has been signed into law by Governor Newsom and will go into effect on January 1, 2023. This Live Events Safety Law sets workplace safety training and certification standards for companies that produce live events at publicly owned and operated venues.

Here are excerpts from the Bill:

“9251. (a) A contracting entity shall require an entertainment events vendor to certify for its employees, and any subcontractors’ employees, as part of the contract for production of any live event at its public events venue, both of the following:

(1) An employee of an entertainment events vendor involved in the setting up, operation, or tearing down of a live event at the venue has completed the Cal/OSHA-10, the OSHA-10/General Entertainment Safety training, or the OSHA-10 as applicable to their occupation.

(2) One of the following applies:

- (a) Heads of departments and leads have completed the Cal/OSHA-30, the OSHA-30/General Entertainment safety training, or the OSHA-30, and are certified through the Entertainment Technician Certification Program relevant to the task or tasks they are supervising or performing, or another certification program, as specified by the division.
- (b) An entertainment events vendor shall certify in writing, and as part of the contract, that they have verified the training completion and certification requirements of all employees, and any subcontractor’s employees, who will work on the setting



Ron Guardado, Kish Rigging’s ETCP Certified Motor Department Head, inspects a chain for a CM Chain Motor hoist.





ETCP certified production rigger Scott Crawford is shown performing a rescue as part of the training in Kish Rigging's Authorized Rescue Training (ART) program.

up, operation, or tearing down of the event.”

Joshua Doane, our full-time Safety Manager/Trainer, brought his rope access and military inspection specialist skills to Kish Rigging in 2019. Josh is responsible for regulatory compliance and training. Additionally, he participates in our formal Job Hazard Assessment and Risk Management program (JHARMP). In this program, a team comprised of our CEO, structural engineer, and safety manager review every project, prior to load in, with the project manager/lead rigger assigned to that project. This process provides oversight and collaborative support for the person responsible for installing the project and helps to identify and mitigate risk.

From Josh's perspective:

“For some people, ‘safety’ means an uninspired speech in the morning and fingers crossed after the meeting, hoping for the

best. Our approach is to raise awareness to the forefront and instill good habits by practicing what we preach.”

“For me, it's clear that those of us working in the industry today have a duty to advance the work of those that came before us. We must continue to lead our industry forward, advancing safety and awareness for everyone's benefit.”

Looking back, we have come a long way as an industry. Gone are the days when rigging was a function of intuition, ego, and the ability to conquer personal fear when you went up in the steel with no fall protection.

The advances made in education, training, and certification have allowed shows to become larger and heavier, with some shows approaching the structural limits of the buildings they hang in. It's hard to imagine that the rapid installation of today's massive and complex shows would be safe, let alone even possible, without the confidence and efficiencies gained through training and certification.

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Today's riggers are better educated and much more likely to be supported by their fellow riggers and by the engineers that review their rigging plots. Certification has helped the community accept the real and pressing need for knowledge and training.

Our experience at Kish Rigging has shown that investing time, money, and effort is not only good in terms of safety, it is also good for business. We look forward to the challenges of the future, and the opportunity to continue our contribution to safety, this for the sake of everyone who finds themselves looking up at the rigging, including those that ask themselves “how did that get up there?” ■



**JR Cassidy** is currently the Chief Executive Officer at Kish Rigging Inc. He began his career in 1975 as a fourth-generation stagehand and is a proud member of IATSE Local One.

JR prides himself on identifying, mentoring, and providing exciting opportunities to individuals who share the same passion he had at the beginning of his career and still possesses to this very day.

His attention to detail is just as important to him personally as it is professionally, and is reflected in his abstract artwork, which provides him a sanctuary from the daily stress associated with running a rigging company.