



How important is ETCP Certification?

Participants simulate real-world rigging applications through hands-on practice during Reed Rigging's annual CM MegaSchool.

WHY, IT'S ALMOST AS IMPORTANT as spreading the word about ETCP Certification itself. Let's think for a moment about why we even have the ETCP. Is it for bragging rights about how well your test score measures up against your buddy's? Does it open doors for you to work in venues or on jobs that require ETCP Certification? Will your email signature be that much cooler with the addition of the logo? Obviously, those questions are all easily answered "Yes," but none of them addresses the most important value of ETCP Certification—**Safety**. It's easy to throw around safety as something we strive for on each event, but safety doesn't happen by accident. Just as we all had a learning curve when we first started on the job, practicing safety is something that is learned and takes effort.

Most other professional trades don't need to explain their certifications to their customers because their work is widely understood. Everyone knows what they expect a doctor, a lawyer, or a pilot to do when they're on the job because those professionals undergo extensive training before they start their career. Inside our industry, we know what it means to be a rigger, an electrician, or a power-distribution technician. How many times have you struggled to explain your job to someone outside of the entertainment industry? How will it help the industry if more people know about ETCP Certification?

We've seen more and more venues include the requirement for technicians working at their property to be ETCP Certified, and that's a great step. This

year in Chicago, a new city ordinance was passed requiring all rigging of portable audiovisual equipment and systems must be performed by a person holding a valid rigger's certification through ETCP. That shows us that the people setting the rules by which we play [work] are catching on to the skills required to do our jobs safely.

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It means we've gained their trust in what it means to be ETCP Certified, so now it is up to us to keep it. Who among us doesn't look

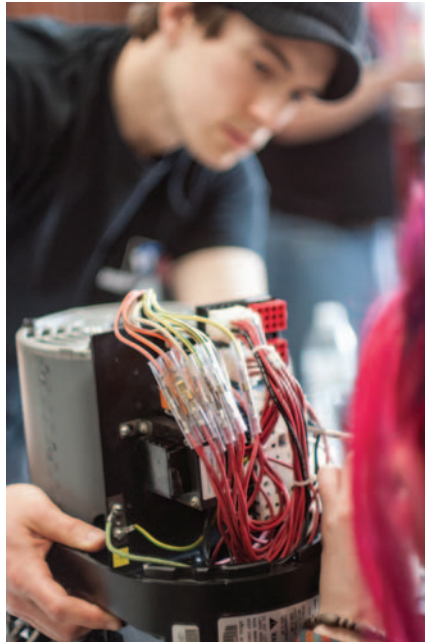
All four ETCP Certification examinations will be given at The NAMM Show in Anaheim, CA, on January 26 and 27, 2018. Candidates may only take one examination type per day. The application deadline is January 5, 2018. To download the "Onsite Paper and Pencil Application," please visit: <http://etcp.esta.org/certify/certify.html>.

at the rigging or power-distribution gear when attending an event while off the clock? Did you see anything that, to put it nicely, "had room for improvement?" If you said anything to the event staff, did they have a clue what you were talking about? As hard as a village public works department may try to be safe by requiring an onsite inspection and posting a passing certificate of a small, four-post stage structure, does it really help if all four of the water ballast tanks are bone dry and the crank towers each only have half of their outriggers installed? Just as we

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have to always keep training to improve our skills, we have the opportunity to train the people who hire us to know the value of our certification. How much credibility do we take away from our certification if we allow unsafe practices to go unchecked and cause an accident? Will it make a difference to the doctor treating an injured person if the injury was caused by faulty equipment, poor practices, or simple carelessness? Of course, the insurance agents and lawyers will look at all of those circumstances to place blame, but it makes no difference in the operating room.

To make certain safety is always the ultimate arbiter in any conflict, at any event, we have to start with it in the pole position. It takes hard work to balance customer requests, shrinking budgets, and



As part of Columbus McKinnon's RTC Motor School, attendees see every inch of a Lodestar hoist.

sometimes absurd production schedules that are all screaming for attention while still holding safety paramount. We practice sales call scripts and buzzwords to prepare for conversations with customers. The accounting department prepares profit and

loss reports for after-job analysis meetings. Trucking schedules, flights, and lodging are juggled continuously to keep up with changes. Was there a "toolbox talk" in the shop the morning before the show was prepped and loaded onto the truck? Did anyone check the contents of the first-aid kit in the workbox? Will the touring crew be shown where the exits are and where to meet for a head count if needed?

One of the great aspects to the ETCP Certification is the requirement of ongoing training. The program was created by experts who all got together and talked about what was important to make events safer. They shared their experience, knowledge, and ideas not to set the highest level that could be achieved, but rather to create a baseline of abilities to perform a job safely. It's our responsibility now to keep raising that bar while simultaneously pushing it just a little further out of reach. The CFO of a company may be reluctant to spend money to send an employee out for training, especially if that person is already certified and good at their job. It can be a hard pill to swallow to pull someone from an already lean department during the busy season or to spend (seemingly) non-revenue



ETCP Certified Rigger Bob Lannon of RPL Building Services shares his knowledge gained from time on the road and years of rope access work.



Instructors aren't the only source of information at Reed Rigging training events. Participants teach and learn from each other as well.



Open dialogue and communication are critical to safety onsite, so questions are encouraged during training.

ETCP Certification? How can we improve it? How can we all work together towards the common goal of improving event safety for everyone—attendees, performers, and production crew? While we train to improve task-specific skills, are we training ourselves hard enough at producing training programs for those skills? As humbling as it can be to ask for help sometimes, are we serving the future ETCP technicians as well as we can? Many of you reading this have tremendous amounts of experience in the industry and have undoubtedly forgotten more than I can expect to ever

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producing money during the slow season. Goodness knows hosting a training event is even more expensive in both time and money than attending one. Every time we host a training seminar, things get a little haywire at the shop in preparation for it. Our daily routine has a wrench thrown in it, but we learn something important because of it. Taking time to practice teaching safety shines a light on where we need to improve our own procedures, so I'm excited for each class that comes through the door. At our company, we're fortunate to have a leader who was present at the beginning of the ETCP yet never misses a chance to remind us that he'll attend one of Rocky Paulson's training seminars tomorrow because he knows he'll come out better because of it.

It seems safe to say everyone here values the ETCP and holds its accomplishments in high regard. The ongoing expansion of disciplines now available for certification shows the growth and development that has been achieved in relatively short order compared to the age of the entertainment industry. So where do we go next with

know about it, so please don't think I'm being so presumptuous to have answers here—I'm asking questions out loud to get everyone talking about their answers, together. Thankfully, people before us have determined we all have the same responsibility to gravity and accept the same theory of electricity, so we should be able to skip most of the arguments on those matters. I for one know there is endless room for improvement before, during, and after every training seminar we host, and I look forward to meeting anyone willing to help with that. ■



Bennett Brian is General Manager at Reed Rigging, Inc. In the past 10-plus years, Bennett has been fortunate to rub elbows with some of the best in the entertainment industry and hopes that streak of good luck continues.