

Safety and ETCP Certification

HEALTH AND SAFETY IS MORE THAN RULES, it's a culture. To cultivate that culture, the tone needs to be set from the top of any organization: clearly outlining company policy, resources, and the personal responsibilities of each employee. But the buy-in for compliance and any safety program is crucial at every level of an organization top to bottom—from studio execs to PAs, in order to be effective.

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How do we achieve that safety culture, hire qualified employees, and get that buy in? Employers want skilled crews that factor in a high standard of safety into every task. Putting safety first is always in the employer's best interest; it reduces the risk of injuries and accidents, lessens the likelihood of financial and schedule impacts, and can positively impact company morale. So, the goal is to maintain a safe workplace, but that isn't just one person's responsibility: it's the responsibility of everyone.

Our industry is anything but ordinary. We know that many elements of production will have a high-risk factor. How we mitigate that risk involves cooperation and a high standard of expertise for the task at hand, risk involved, and the appropriate safety measures to ultimately create those cutting-edge moments and safely produce the art we set out to achieve.

As a health and safety professional, crew demonstrating recognition of good practices and applicable knowledge in their respected role is hugely important—not only to satisfy the desire to have the best of the best working on our productions but to cultivate that safety culture for all, especially those just beginning their careers. How we show up and lead by example across the board shapes the new generation, preparing them for a long, safe, and successful career.

Qualified well-seasoned technicians are always the most sought after, but post-pandemic, our industry, like so many



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others, experienced a labor shortage with many not returning to the workforce. That, however, did not impact the amount of production—if anything, there was a need for more content and faster turnaround. That's exciting when there is demand for the work we do but can also become overly risky when the quantity and speed at which they are needed doesn't match the workforce. At times, there are more riggers and electricians working events in a given region than there are certified professionals. Of course, there

are always some producers out there who just want the job done and will choose looking the other way rather than giving adequate time to find or train crews appropriately. This should be a red flag. Not only is this risky by creating a potentially unsafe workplace, but it also can damage a safety culture and put the production at a high risk for accidents, injuries, and financial or regulatory impacts.

With a wave of new faces just starting out and many familiar faces not returning, how do we know if the individuals hired are competent and ready to tackle new projects with safety being paramount?

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Unions are great partners. IATSE Training Trust Fund, CSATF, safety training within the individual locals, etc. are huge resources to employers with their training rosters for crew members to help us know that everyone showing up to stage or set are compliant and up to date on the training relevant to their job duties. But not every gig is union. Sometimes the work at hand requires additional training. Depending on time, bespoke training can be arranged but, as we all know, having extra time in any prep schedule is almost unheard of. Yet we cannot proceed working without the appropriate training and asking to budget extra days into an already tight production schedule can be a battle. That's when it's crucial to know that your technicians have that knowledge needed to work safely on day one.

When you think about the ETCP Certifications available, they are huge categories that require a gold standard stamp of safety knowledge as they impact, in one way or another, every other department involved in production. That ETCP Certification is the stamp we trust and look for. It signals to an employer, you have a certified knowledge of standards and safety; the baseline you are starting at is a high one, giving us confidence in the work at hand. It goes beyond just that tick list for the safety professional though. It signals to us that your safety knowledge for the potential risk (anticipated or not) is keen, and you are prepared to mitigate risk for yourself and those working with you. This is so important. I, the safety guy, am not the competent person in rigging, electrics, and portable power. I'm the person who needs to make sure YOU are! Your certification lets me know that you are a prepared competent partner for me to work with to get us to YES!

As a safety professional, I always check my ego at the door. I'm in awe of our crews—the talent and collective wealth of knowledge that allow us to make magic on the big screen and keep our live theatrical productions up and running eight shows a week, is truly incredible. That is why qualified/certified workers are equally crucial with their input in building, maintaining, and auditing safety programs. I need to ensure that we are maintaining compliance,

but you and I together figure out how we get there. ETCP Certified professionals are essential to help tailor and make those rules fit in a way that doesn't hinder the work while truly keeping our departments as safe as possible. We know OSHA wasn't made for the entertainment world; we must think outside of the box to make a very black and white rule fit our various shades of grey. It's this teamwork that gets us to a safe "yes" and sets the pace for a true and successful safety culture in the workplace.

ETCP focuses on disciplines that directly affect the health and safety of crews, performers, and audiences. The ETCP Certification Council consists of representatives from Cirque du Soleil, Disney Parks and Resorts, Disney Theatrical Productions, Encore, Live Nation, NBCUniversal (myself included), and PRG. In addition, the following organizations maintain seats on the ETCP Council: Entertainment Services and Technology Association (ESTA), Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), Audio Visual and Integrated Experience Association (AVIXA), The Broadway League, Canadian Institute for Theatre Technology (CITT/ICTS), Event Safety Alliance, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM), Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), and United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT). The chairs of the Subject Matter Expert committees also serve on the ETCP Council: Karen Butler, Derek Coleman, Alan Rowe, Bill Sapsis, and Steve Terry. And the ETCP Council includes individual members: Steven Ehrenberg, Tony Galuppi, Anna Glover, Dr. Marilyn Hetzel, Kent Jorgensen, and Eddie Raymond.

As you can see, there is a long list of organizations, SMEs, and individual members that believe in the ETCP Certification program, putting safety and safety culture first! ETCP Certifications are available in the following areas: Rigger – Arena, Rigger – Theatre, Entertainment Electrician, and Portable Power Distribution Technician. ■



Adam Tackett is currently a Senior EHS Manager for Production (Live Theatre and Features) at NBCUniversal. He has more than 20 years in the industry at large, and experience-based knowledge ranging from onstage to behind the scenes, casting, teaching, and production management.

Adam is a passionate entertainment professional with more than eight years' experience in production EHS management, both domestic and international. He represents NBCUniversal in several organizations including: USITT, Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), Safety Advisors Forum for Live Entertainment (SAFLE), Theatre Advisory Group (TAG) within IOSH (UK), and the Mental Health Initiative with Behind the Scenes.

Adam prides himself on taking a "whole human" approach to safety management, recognizing that physical health and safety go hand in hand with mental/psychological health and safety to create a truly safe work environment. Through communication and collaboration, his focus is on building strong relationships to not only achieve compliance, but safely push new and innovative boundaries in the entertainment industry.

Meet ESTA's ETCP Program Manager

Christina Smith built her career in entertainment working with companies such as Folger Theatre, Chautauqua Ballet, the Contemporary American Theater Festival, and Forum Theater. Additionally, she freelanced as a live-events technician with companies serving the Mid-Atlantic region. Christina brings years of experience coordinating classes, communications, and events in a vibrant arts education setting, having worked at The Old Opera House and the School of Music at Shepherd University, both in Jefferson County, WV. She is a current member of Long Reach Long Riders (LRLR) and has served on the Executive Committee of USITT Chesapeake.

Christina joined ESTA as the ETCP Program Manager in May. She can be reached at 212-244-1505 ext. 705 or direct dial 304-300-9405 and christina.smith@esta.org.

Here are five quick responses from Christina. Please join ESTA and ETCP in welcoming our new ETCP Program Manager.

What makes you a good fit as ETCP Program Manager?

My blend of entertainment industry experience and higher education work. In 2016, I stepped into an industry-adjacent job working with a NASM-accredited school of music at a university. I am excited to use the skills I developed during my time in higher education to drive safety in our industry through ETCP.

What are your top priority ETCP projects to focus on during your second six months?

ETCP has many stakeholders, and I will be focusing on building relationships with them. I will also be personally working with folks whose certifications expired during the pandemic to guide them through the appeals process for recertification.



Share your one-minute elevator pitch on why a rigger or electrician in the industry should become ETCP Certified?

ETCP has a deservedly prestigious reputation. Becoming ETCP Certified is the best way to indicate your expertise in your craft and commitment to safety within our industry.

Describe one takeaway you learned from the pandemic that you will continue?

I learned the value of buying into the community where you live. My partner is a rigger and was furloughed during the pandemic. Our community immediately stepped up to make sure we had the support we needed the entire time. I'll always carry that lesson with me. Volunteer, go to the town/city council meetings, say yes to coffee invites—make connections with folks who live near you.

What's your most used productivity hack?

During the last few minutes of each day, I create my to-do list for the next day. This allows me a faster, more organized way to start each morning.