



PROTOCOL

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The Entertainment Technician Certification Program celebrates 10 years!

It's summer and a young woman's fancy turns to guys . . . 26

When to use what, where, how (Codes and standards untangled) 36

"Best Practices:" A legal disclaimer 44

Demystifying the sales channel: Explaining the relationship between Dealers, Reps, and Manufacturers 60



The Entertainment Technician Certification Program celebrates 10 years!

BY TIM HANSEN

The industry is better because of ETCP—with additional expansion ahead to continue to increase the level of safety and professionalism in the entertainment industry.

IN NOVEMBER OF 2005, A NEW ERA BEGAN BACKSTAGE. No, it was not some great new product that did everything and brought the donuts. November 2005 marked the issuance of the first Rigging certifications from the Entertainment Technician Certification Program. And, one year later, in 2006, the first Entertainment Electrician certifications were issued. How did this happen, and more importantly, why?

The Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) had been under development for several years before that day in 2005. Members of ESTA's Technical Standards Program had wondered how the technical standards they were writing would be used by the entertainment industry at large. At one point it was suggested that individuals could be certified for the individual standards. That quickly morphed into a much larger concept of certifying people in some of the disciplines that are in use every day. Particular emphasis was given to the disciplines that would have the greatest effect on keeping people—performers, workers, and audience members—safe at all times. These disciplines are rigging and electrical.

It quickly became clear that the organization did not possess the knowledge to develop a formal certification program on its own, so ESTA reached out to a consultant in the field of certification to help develop the outline of the program. With his help, we were able to create the program as it stands today. Key stakeholders in the industry including employers, labor, and venues agreed to

participate, both with generous contributions of cash, and with their time. I have been privileged to chair the ETCP Council since its inception. See the impressive list of ETCP Council members on page 18 or visit the ETCP website at www.etcp.plasa.org.

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Once the ETCP Council had been formed, the work began in earnest. A framework for the entire program was created, including requirements for qualifying to take the certification exams, renewals, continuing education, appeals, and discipline. A code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was created that every certified person agrees to adhere to. In order to create the certification exams, groups of experts, known as subject matter experts, were assembled to conduct a job task analysis which was sent to thousands of



In Memoriam: Certified technicians we lost since 2005

John Brennan	J.W. Moore, IV	Tony Ruksys	David Thornton
Trevor Dandurand	Jyle Nogee	Brutus Schwartz	Frank Willard
Harry Donovan	Brian Parker	Nancy Shaw	David Wilson
Kevin McCloy	Chris Perry	Jack Suesse	Jake Winkleman

technicians to validate, and then to write the test questions. Ask any one of them and they will tell you it was both the most difficult and simultaneously rewarding experience they have been through. The process of developing the test questions took almost a year, and the exams were finally ready. Since the first exams were administered, almost 2,200 certifications have been awarded.

Everyone involved with the event . . . deserves to go home safely at the end of the day.

So, why does all this matter? I asked some of the people who are in the field that question. Bridget Cox of J. R. Clancy says, “From the creation of ETCP, I was proud of the industry for taking a proactive approach in regulating a relatively incognito profession. While other industries similar to ours within the US are scrutinized by regulatory agencies and codes in many cases, our small niche industry tends to fly under the radar. Therefore, taking the initiative to develop a self-imposed formal certification program which requires a combination of professional and on-going educational experience in specific areas is to be commended.”

Over the last 10 years, the program has gained wide recognition throughout North America. Many venues now require Certified Riggers and Electricians for their events. Ed Barnes, Vice President of Operations at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle says, “As a facility manager, I applaud the Certification Council for the comprehensive standards assembled within ETCP. I also appreciate the diverse membership base, viewpoints, and experiences incorporated into its principles.”

“As such, our convention center instituted the requirement of utilizing ETCP certified riggers and rigging supervisors for most suspended applications. The decision was really an easy one. Why would we continue to *trust* that all rigging beyond our line of sight is being attached safely and to best practice standards when, instead, we could be ensured of it by requiring ETCP certified riggers? We have found that certified riggers have greater confidence in their abilities and bring issues to our attention that went unsaid in the past.”

The Event Safety Alliance is also a big supporter of the program. They share a common goal with ETCP—everyone involved with the event—workers, performers, and audience members—deserves to go home safely at the end of the day.

The importance of the certifications is being recognized everywhere, including overseas. According to Bridget Cox, “When working internationally, you begin to realize with some surprise that in many ways some countries in Europe and Asia are more developed than we are with regards to the paperwork requirements and certain standards, so having this qualification goes a long way overseas towards increased confidence from others.”

A lasting effect of the program is the increased level of training and education. Renewing a certification requires both work and continuing education. At the inception of the program, there were very few training opportunities available. As people became familiar with the program, they realized that there is a continuing

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International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)

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Pat White, Director of Education and Training

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professional development component required for renewing. Now, 10 years later, there are many more opportunities for training.

There are currently 18 companies who offer ETCP Recognized Training Programs for those seeking renewal credits and almost 70 Recognized Trainers who offer courses within their specialties to fill the same need. Not only do certified technicians need credits to recertify, those who are studying to take the exam seek out training to help them prepare. This helps strengthen the industry, and advance the safety of all involved.

The overall program is best described by Bridget Cox, “The ETCP certification program has helped to create a distinction between various facets of the industry, which offers greater ability to ensure you have a qualified person performing various facets of work as appropriate. One of the really good decisions that was made during the development of the ETCP certification is that you are required to have a certain minimum amount of professional experience, which is key to the validity of this program. There is still the danger always in the entertainment rigging industry that someone who works on a stage, but not specifically in rigging, will try to perform work in this highly specialized trade. If you wouldn’t have a rigger do the commercial wiring in your new construction building, why would you have an electrician hang thousands of pounds of equipment over the heads of artists and audiences? The ETCP certification is one positive step towards ensuring we have qualified people within the industry performing the scope of work they are trained and experienced with, and mitigating the risks of under-qualified people without the experience performing rigging installations. Thanks to the ETCP certification exams, there is now a great and growing network of individuals within the industry in the US and Canada who can work together to continue towards the goal of having an experienced and accomplished rigger in each major venue and project that exists in these countries.”

The effect of the program is summed up by Marilyn Hetzel of Metro State University in Denver, CO, who says, “I see a heightened awareness of the need for safe practices. I see a level of trust placed in those who have earned certification. I see a certain level of respect associated with the ETCP Certification.”

We have all come a long way in the last 10 years, and the industry is better because of it. The next 10 years will see the Entertainment Technician Program continue to expand and further increase the level of safety and professionalism in the entertainment industry. ■

ETCP Subject Matter Experts

FOR THE ORIGINAL RIGGING CERTIFICATIONS IN 2005:



Roy Bickel
John Bleich
Eddie Blue
David Boevers
Karen Butler
Olan Cottrill
James Doherty
Harry Donovan
Kelly Green
Glenn Hufford
Edward Kish
Stéphane Mayrand
Joseph McGeough
Brian Miller
Walter Murphy
Rocky Paulson
G. Anthony Phillips
Eddie Raymond
Michael Reed
Bill Sapsis
Peter Scheu
Scott Sloan
Sammy Stokes
Jack Suesse

ADDITIONAL RIGGING SMES THAT HELPED DEVELOP THE NEW EXAMINATIONS IN 2012:

Pat Bash
Marcel Boulet
Eric Braun
Dan Culhane
Brad Dittmer
Russ Dusek
Tony Galuppi
Ethan Gilson
Tom Heemskerck
Dan Houser
Eric McAfee
Joe Mooneyham
Mark O'Brien
Eric Rouse
Gil Vinzant

IN 2010, THE FOLLOWING RIGGING SMES FROM MONTREAL ASSISTED IN THE FRENCH TRANSLATION:

David Charbonneau
Patrick Chassin
Jean-Francois Dube
Hugo Hamel
Jean-Yves Laroche
Francois Laurion
Pierre Masse
Stéphane Mayrand
Colin Noël
Brian Parker
Ewen Seagel
Claude Sergerie

ORIGINAL ELECTRICAL SMES FROM 2006:



Rick Baxter
Eric Bouchard
Jeanette Farmer
Ian Foulds
David Hatch
John Huntington
Tony Giovannetti
Dave Loftin
Jim Maloney
Alan Rowe
Nancy Shaw
Ken Vannice

ADDITIONAL ELECTRICAL SMES THAT HELPED DEVELOP THE NEW EXAMINATIONS IN 2014:

Don Earl
Mitch Hefter
Mark O'Brien
Martin Eric Rimes
Steve Terry
Abby Tutorow
Steve Vanciel
Keith Woods



Tim Hansen has been involved in the entertainment industry for over 35 years, with many different companies. He is currently the Sales Manager for Oasis Stage Werks in Salt Lake City, UT. He is the Co-Chair of the ETCP Council, a member of the Rigging Working Group, Co-Chair of the Floors Working Group, and has served on the ESTA Board of Directors.



All three ETCP examinations will be given in one session during the morning of October 24 at LDI 2015 in Las Vegas. Application deadline is September 25, 2015. Don't delay—get your application in today! Please visit <http://etcp.plasa.org/> for more information.

**ETCP WOULD LIKE TO THANK
THE INDUSTRY FOR ITS ONGOING
SUPPORT TO THE PROGRAM!**



**OVER 2000 CERTIFICATIONS =
A SAFER INDUSTRY**

**www.etcp.plasa.org
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