

# Twenty years on, ETCP continues to grow

BACK IN 2005, you could ride the New York City Subway for a base fare of \$2.00, the national average price for a gallon of gas was \$1.87, and for a dozen eggs it was \$1.16. Putting nostalgia for the days of cheaper gas, eggs, and subway rides aside (although, as a NYC'er I'll never turn down a cheaper subway ride), I share this bit of history as a reminder that in the span of 20 years, so much can change. Throughout those same 20 years, the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) has issued over 4,000 certifications.

So, what do ESTA, Disney Theatrical Productions, IATSE, PRG, USITT, NBCUniversal, and Walt Disney Parks and Resorts all have in common? This isn't a bad dad joke. All those organizations, and more(!), believe

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so much in the ETCP that they have representatives who sit on the ETCP governing body, known as the Certification Council.

In addition to certifications, those organizations, plus others, send volunteer representatives to guide the council with energy and collective wisdom into infinity and beyond. ETCP grew so much in the first two decades that an expansion with the Portable Power Distribution Technician certification was added in 2016, alongside our Arena and Theatrical Rigging and Entertainment Electrician certifications.

If we were in Oz, the “pay no attention to the man behind the curtain” line would have significant weight, but I want to pull back the curtains a little bit. I've been a part of the council since 2009/2010 and started off

as an alternate NBCUniversal representative and eventually the primary.

In my time with the council, I have learned so much, and not just about all the certifications and programs ESTA has on offer; I have learned from knowledgeable industry professionals and have fostered lasting friendships and relationships with those around the table. There is not one person participating that does not have the best interest of the program and its certifications at heart.

I don't recall how I came to hear about ETCP or ESTA, but I am grateful for whoever pulled me in, sat me down, and put me to work. It has been one of the most rewarding experiences in my professional career. And—circling back to that curtain—as the

newly appointed Co-Chair of the Council, it is my honor to say thank you to those who make up the council and sit around the table with the goal of keeping ETCP and its programs moving forward. To Alan, Steve, Eric, Bill, Tim, Todd, Steve, Matt, Chris, Michael, Jacquie, Michael, Hannah, Pat, Russell, Michael, Joe, Mark, James, Drew, Joe, Adam, Fred, Jere, Orestes, David, Steven, Tony, Marilyn, Kent, and Eddie—my heartfelt thanks for all the work that you do around the council table and for all that you have taught me in my time shared with you. There are others who have had a place on the council and have moved on to other professional venues or work, so for anyone who has ever been part of the ETCP Council for whatever period of time, thanks for all

that you've done to help us to get where we are today.

The ETCP Council has so much more than four meetings a year. In fact, most of the work on the council goes on outside the meetings. Recognizing providers and trainers, accrediting classes and sessions that will count toward renewal credit, tracking renewals, dealing with disciplinary concerns and appeals, marketing the program, keeping our tests current, staying current with industry trends in the US and Canada, as well as the rest of the world, and so much more. Discovering what might be next for the program, exploring other potential certifications, or working with international organizations that would like to develop certifications and programs of their own are just a few of the other tasks keeping the council busy throughout the year.

During the pandemic years some of our certified technicians recognized the need for qualified professionals who could set up large volumes of equipment quickly and efficiently. With most of the industry without work and with the assistance of IATSE, they pivoted to assisting with the set-up of field hospitals.

There are probably so many other stories out there about how an ETCP certification has been influential or has helped our technicians have a rewarding experience outside of their day-to-day work. We'd love to hear about them. Please share them with us! Email ETCP Program Manager Christina Smith at [christina.smith@esta.org](mailto:christina.smith@esta.org). ■

## What is ETCP?

The Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) focuses on disciplines that directly affect the health and safety of crews, performers, and audiences. Eligible entertainment technicians may take exams to become certified as one or more of the following:

- Arena–Rigger
- Theatre–Rigger
- Entertainment–Electrician
- Portable Power Distribution Technician

Eligibility is based on a history of relevant work hours or a combination of relevant work hours and education experience.

### Who created ETCP?

#### What is the ETCP Council?

In March of 2003, ESTA's Board of Directors envisioned a personnel certification program for entertainment technology technicians. That same year, ESTA was joined by IATSE, USITT, IAVM, TEA, and CITT, and in 2004, AMPPT, InfoComm International, Live Nation, and PRG to assist in the development of the program. Since then, the ETCP Council has welcomed even more organizations, including The League of American Theatres and Producers, Cirque du Soleil, The Broadway League, ESA, Broadway Across America, Encore Global, Disney Theatrical Productions, NBCUniversal, and Walt Disney

Parks and Resorts. While not all of these organizations are still on the council, their service has been instrumental in guiding the program. The Council, which is the governing body for ETCP, marks an unprecedented alliance of leaders representing all facets of the entertainment technology industry. At the core of the Council are the industry organizations whose presence ensures their members' voices continue to be heard in the management of the program. Representing potential candidates, those who employ them, and those in whose facilities they work, these organizations have embraced the benefits that personnel certification can bring to our industry.

Electrical and Rigging Subject Matter Experts are represented on the Council by the Chairs of these SME groups, all highly respected authorities in their fields. Additional viewpoints and leadership skills are brought to the Council by individuals appointed for their experience in a wide range of areas including program development, marketing and fundraising, and legal knowledge.

### Why should I become certified?

An ETCP certification gives you a credential that says, "I know what I am doing, and I am committed to safety and expertise in my craft." When you become an ETCP

Certified Technician, you join the ranks of the elite in the entertainment industry, and that can give you the competitive advantage you need. Crafted by leading organizations, unions, major employers, and world-class technicians, ETCP is the way the industry defines "safe"—and employers know it.

ETCP certification helps employers immediately identify riggers and electricians with proven capabilities. Companies that hire ETCP Certified Riggers, Entertainment Electricians, and Portable Power Distribution Technicians are saying they want to further an industry-wide standard that ensures the safest possible workplace and a highly efficient workforce.

Major employers and union locals have devoted many hours to developing and supporting the program with the goal of integrating certifications for lead positions into job bids and contracts. Over the last decade, many major industry employers have phased this in as a requirement. Illinois and California have both passed laws requiring ETCP Certified technicians for events in certain venue types. Learn more about how to become a certified technician at <https://etcp.esta.org/>.



**Greg Petruska** is the Director of Environment, Health and Safety for Live Theatre at NBCUniversal. He joined NBCUniversal in the summer of 2004, and for a while he was the sole safety manager for

television productions in NYC. He has worked on such iconic shows as *Saturday Night Live* (SNL), *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, and *Law and Order*. In 2008, Greg joined the Live Theatre Safety team to support the opening of *Billy Elliot the Musical* on Broadway. He currently supports

*Wicked* and *Billy Elliot the Musical* in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia and is responsible for all EHS programs related to Live Theatre.