PRIMACERT WHITE PAPER

THE CASE FOR CERTIFICATION OF PROCESS SAFETY COMPETENCY

Prepared by Primacert

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What is competency?

Competency is the ability of personnel to perform tasks according to specified requirements. It implies appropriate qualifications, training, skills, physical and mental capabilities, knowledge, understanding, behavior, and attitudes. Acceptable performance results when competency is combined with performance standards.

What is certification?

Certification is confirmation that an individual has a specific set of skills, knowledge, and abilities. It is a mistake to base an assumption of competency on just experience, training, possession of a qualification, or the use of a procedure to perform a task, although some companies do so. Assumptions may be incorrect and they do not capture all key aspects of competency. Formal certification of competency is a process that recognizes individuals who meet defined certification criteria.

Why is certification needed for process safety?

Process safety incidents can be catastrophic. Many lives can be lost, large amounts of property destroyed, and serious damage done to the environment and the reputations of companies. People whose tasks impact process safety are critical to managing the risk of incidents. All process safety incidents involve some aspect of human failure and such failures must be managed. Managing human failures requires ensuring the competency of people.

How do companies benefit from employing personnel with certifications?

Competent personnel reduce the risks of process safety incidents. Certified personnel also are more likely to produce high-quality work products. Certification of personnel also demonstrates to regulators and other stakeholders the company's commitment to process safety. In the unfortunate instance of experiencing a process safety incident, process safety certifications of personnel may help in defending the company in the face of ensuing litigation.

How do individuals benefit from certification?

Certification enhances the credentials and increases the professional value of individuals. Employability, promotion prospects, and remuneration are favorably impacted. Certified individuals demonstrate a commitment to professional development

that companies seek. Of course, every person who works in a major hazards facility and has some responsibility for process safety will help to ensure their own safety and the safety of their fellow employees by taking the steps necessary to achieve process safety certification.

Who should be certified?

Personnel should be certified according to the possible impact the work that they perform may have on process safety risks. Key technical activities that are critical aspects of process safety include process hazard analysis (PHA), layers of protection analysis (LOPA), process safety auditing, and procedure writing. Also, some individuals need a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of process safety. A company's competency management policies should identify the roles and the people who should be certified in such disciplines.

What is meaningful certification?

Certification requirements for a technical discipline must be based on an analysis of appropriate performance requirements in order to establish a standard for competency. Certifications can then be provided based on the education, experience, practice, training, and knowledge of individuals in the technical discipline. Primacert has established a program of certifications that meet these requirements. Certifications require proficiency to be demonstrated through a combination of relevant academic qualifications; amount of experience; appropriate training; references who can attest to qualifications, experience, and professional ethics; successful completion of an examination; and, in some cases, review of work products.

Making contributions to the ongoing development of a technical discipline is a valuable activity in its own right but it is not an appropriate criterion for judging competency as it is subjective and may be fleeting.

Why Primacert?

Primacert was founded by Primatech Inc. as an independent organization to certify the competency of process safety personnel. For over 30 years, Primatech has driven the process safety field with innovative approaches and a reputation for excellence. Primacert continues this tradition by offering certifications in a variety of process safety disciplines. Most certifications are offered at three increasing levels of competence so that individuals can progress from basic to higher levels of competency as their knowledge, understanding, and ability to apply skills develops in a technical discipline.

For more information:

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