



Training

## The Path to Becoming a Safety Professional: Certifications and Steps

Julie Sullivan | Dec 05, 2017

### What You Need to Know:

Increased certifications provide better opportunities for advancement for the employee and drive up safety for the business.

There are multiple certification possibilities under the title of certified safety professional, allowing employees and companies to add depth to their safety team bench.

Certified industrial hygienists help companies identify potential problems before they lead to safety concerns.

For safety managers working in manufacturing, intensive schooling, training and certification can lead to a robust career and salary—and help improve a business's bottom line.

Whether it's workplace falls, exposure to toxic chemicals or electrocution, or merely a nick or bruise, each day that employees clock in—in manufacturing especially—brings with it potential dangers. And it's the job of safety managers to help keep those hours on the clock as harm-free as possible for a company's employees.

A fundamental way that manufacturers large and small drive up safety is through having well-trained safety teams. Given this, the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** projects safety careers will continue to grow over the next decade.

With so many hazards present for U.S. industrial workers, it's no wonder that workplace safety has emerged as a top field. The **National Bureau of Labor Statistics** cited 4,836 workplace fatalities in 2015, a slight increase from the year prior. Plus, there's a bottom-line factor: Occupational injuries and illnesses cost U.S. businesses **\$170 billion per year**.

"Safety certifications for employees provide companies with consistency in training and work practices, increased confidence from customers, staff adherence to ethical standards, differentiation in marketing, and a standard for projects, promotions, salary increases and career road maps," says David McPeak, director of career development at Pike Enterprises, in an article for **Incident Prevention**. "Like an individual, the more certifications a company possesses, the better it looks on paper."

## How Certifications Impact Safety Professionals

Whether it's a manager, director, associate or specialist position, each role comes with its own set of requirements and certifications. These certifications legitimize safety expertise, boost salary and expand knowledge.

"Degrees and certifications equal money and open doors to a more rewarding and higher-paying future," McPeak says. "The average CSP [certified safety professional] earns about \$17,000 more per year than peers without certification. That translates to \$300,000 or more over the course of a career in safety. A related benefit is members-only access to job boards, training resources, discussion groups and networking opportunities. Less tangible is the personal satisfaction gained from certification along with demonstrated professional development and eagerness to learn."

Here, we outline the educational and work experience journey required to master two of safety's top fields: safety leadership and industrial hygiene.

### Training for Sales Teams Too

Safety training is for everyone — not just those employees wielding equipment and their managers.

Sales and marketing teams need to understand safety practices and regulations too. To that end, there are specialized safety training programs for these workers.

The *International Safety Equipment Association* offers a training path to the Qualified Safety Sales Professional certification. The *QSSP* weeklong program exposes participants "to the full range of safety equipment and safety practices for the workplace," according to ISEA.

## How to Become a Certified Safety Professional

Whether through a bachelor's or master's degree in safety, learning via assignment, entering the field in a leadership role or simply harnessing a deeper understanding of safety through work experience, as the *Board of Certified Safety Professionals* emphasizes, there are numerous ways to become a safety professional.

Although learning on the job is fairly common, the most widely accepted career path in safety involves becoming a CSP in your unique industry and practice.

Here's a brief list of the most popular safety certifications:

- *Certified Safety Professional*
- *Associate Safety Professional*
- *Graduate Safety Practitioner*
- *Safety Management Specialist*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Technologist*
- *Construction Health and Safety Technician*
- *Safety Trained Supervisor*
- *Safety Trained Supervisor Construction*

- ***Certified Environmental, Safety and Health Trainer***

All of these certifications listed require different levels of schooling, work experience and prior certifications.

For example, the Associate Safety Professional certification requires a minimum of a bachelor's degree or an associate degree in safety, health or the environment; at least one year of safety experience (50 percent of that preventive); and passing an exam. For the Certified Environmental, Safety and Health Trainer certification, a person must acquire 14 safety-based credentials before even qualifying. Understanding the targeted field of employment and the applicable level of experience and education are crucial in choosing the correct path to certification.

The **salary** for a CSP is highly dependent on experience and title. An environmental health and safety director earns roughly \$115,595 annually, while a safety officer typically earns considerably less, at an average of \$56,122 a year.

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David McPeak

Director of Career Development at Pike Enterprises

## **How to Become an Industrial Hygienist**

Although safety leadership is an all-encompassing position—watching over most facets of a company's overall health—the industrial hygiene field has a more scientific and engineering focus.

As ***Environmental Science*** details, industrial hygienists cover a wide range of safety oversight, from procedures for handling hazardous materials to ventilation systems and employees' personal protective equipment. Above all, industrial hygienists aim to anticipate and recognize problems before they become dangerous or deadly. The **median salary** for a certified industrial hygienist hovers at \$89,000 annually.

Although certifications to become a safety professional depend on experience and industry-specific demands, the certifications associated with industrial hygiene are fairly straightforward.

Administered by the American Board of Industrial Hygiene, the certification consists of an exam. Those taking the test must also meet a **checklist** of education and work requirements, including a bachelor's degree from a four-year college with ample course credits in science, technology, engineering and math. Additionally, anyone seeking certification must first complete four years of industrial hygiene apprentice work.

Beyond eligibility, an individual must prepare for the exam, which might include computer-based review courses.

***How does your company balance work against training? Share your experience in the comments below.***

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