

Are You Really Certified?

If you hold a private, IAQ-related credential, you will be surprised to learn that it may be nothing more than a training certificate.

ANSI/NOCA Standard 1100, published in March 2009, carefully distinguishes training certificates (referred to as “assessment-based certificates”) from professional certification programs and explains key differences between the two. The standard clarifies an important point of confusion that has plagued the IAQ industry for years, causing considerable friction between competing industry certification programs.

What’s the Difference?

According to the ANSI/NOCA standard, a training certificate (or “assessment-based certificate”) is awarded to someone who attends a particular course of instruction and passes a test based on that course.

A professional certification, on the other hand, is awarded to someone who passes an examination based on broad industry knowledge that is independent of training courses or course providers.

Does It Matter?

In section 8, Standard 1100 stipulates that holders of training certificates may NOT use letters or acronyms behind their names, nor may they use the word “certified” in describing their credentials. The use of letters, acronyms and the word “certified” are reserved to holders of professional certifications as defined in the standard.

This is an extremely important development for the IAQ industry. ANSI/NOCA 1100 suggests that the “certifications” offered by many IAQ organizations today are training certificates only and that those organizations are misleading their members.

The ANSI/NOCA standard does not condemn all IAQ certifying bodies, however. Organizations whose policies qualify them as certification programs under Standard 1100 include the American Board of Industrial Hygiene (ABIH), which offers the CIH designation, the American IAQ Council, which offers the CIEC/CIE, CMRS/CMR and CMC/CMI designations, and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals, which offers the CSP designation. None of these organizations develops or requires specific training courses as prerequisites to certification.

Certification and Accreditation

Predictably, ABIH, the American IAQ Council and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals are also among the only IAQ groups to achieve third party accreditation for their certification programs. That’s

because all national accreditation bodies serving the indoor air quality field strictly prohibit accredited programs from developing, approving or delivering certification prep courses.

A Self-Test

If you are unsure whether your credential is compliant with Standard 1100, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does my certification body develop, accredit or deliver its own certification prep courses?
2. Does my certification body require its own prep course as a prerequisite for certification, or imply that such a course is the only way to certification?

If the answer to these questions is “yes,” then your certification body should not grant titles or use the word “certified” in describing you. According to ANSI/NOCA Standard 1100, your credential is a training certificate, not a professional certification.



Adam Andrews, CIEC is the Assistant Director of the American Council for Accredited Certification, a non-profit certifying body. The ACAC operates independent, third-party accredited certification programs for professionals. For more information about the ACAC and its programs, visit www.certificationcouncil.org.