



BCRSP adds new safety certification

CRST designed for entry-level professionals

The Canadian certification landscape for safety professionals is about to change. In addition to its Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) certification, the Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (BCRSP) is introducing a second certification: the Canadian Registered Safety Technician (CRST). As a result, the education and work experience requirements to qualify to become a CRSP and maintain CRSP status are also increasing.

Commenting on these changes, the chair of the board of governors of the BCRSP, Paul Andre, said: "Within almost any profession various levels of qualification exists. BCRSP has recognized that many safety practitioners have varying degrees of competency and play various roles in occupational health and safety. By adding the CRST certification scheme, BCRSP is providing entry-level safety practitioners a pathway to validate their experience, education and competency through an examination designed for technicians. This new scheme provides a pathway to move from the technician level to the professional level once the necessary experience, education and professional development are in place, should one choose to pursue a professional-level designation."

The CRSP has been the standard for

OHS professional certifications for 40 years. The change to add the CRST certification comes at an important time for the occupational health and safety profession in Canada. The demand for OHS professionals continues to grow and the profession itself is working to be recognized as a true profession. The increase in educational requirements and the inclusions of the cohort of safety practitioners who will work to support safe and healthy workplaces at the technician level broadens the scope of people seeking protection of the OHS discipline as a true professional.

It has long been recognized that a single designation and a single OHS certification process was not descriptive enough to properly cover the personnel doing the full range of jobs and tasks being completed by safety professionals. As a comparison, the engineering community has had the advantage of a professional certification and technician certification scheme for well over 25 years. The safety profession has some catching up to do.

A new blueprint document has been published to guide CRST candidates with practical information about the exam. The new CRST certification scheme aligns well with the *OHS Professional Capability Framework*

published by the International Network of Safety and Health Practitioner Organisations (INSHPO). The document provides a framework to differentiate between the professional and practitioner level. BCRSP became a signatory to the INSHPO framework through the Singapore Accord in 2017.

The first intake of applicants for the new CRST certification scheme will start in late 2018, and the first examination will be scheduled in 2019.

Starting July 1, there will be increased educational and experience requirements for new CRSP candidates and increased educational requirements for existing CRSPs.

The specifics of these changes are as follows:

- Applicants for the CRSP will need to have completed a four-year bachelor degree in any field or a two-year diploma or certificate in occupational health and safety. They will also need four years of relevant work experience.
- Existing CRSPs will be required to either meet the new educational requirements before completing their next five-year certification maintenance program cycle, or complete an equivalency process. It is expected that this will require existing CRSPs who do not meet the new

educational requirements to complete one of several demonstrated equivalency options, such as completing a series of upgrading modules to be administered online by a Canadian university. The requirement to impose this on all existing CRSPs is part of ISO/IEC 17024, a standard for certification bodies to which BCRSP is certified.

- Applicants for the CRST will need to have completed a one-year OHS certificate program or have completed a two-year non-OHS formal education program. They will also need at least one year of relevant work experience.
- Graduates from an approved two-year OHS program will be eligible to write the CRST examination immediately upon graduation. A laddering or transitional pathway from CRST to CRSP is also being made available.

These changes are part of the effort to help Canada catch up with the rest of world. Canada has historically had much lower qualification requirements for candidates seeking professional safety certification. Even with this change, Canada will continue to lag behind the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Australia in terms of the education and experience needed for certification.

Based on the remaining gap, we can expect further changes to increase the education and experience for certification in the future. You can expect that within a decade or less, BCRSP will likely require all candidates seeking the CRSP to have a university degree as is required in the U.S. by the Board of Certified Safety Professionals. The belief is that by adding the CRST and increasing the education and experience requirements for the CRSP, this will lead to increased professional recognition and greater opportunities for OHS professionals in Canada.

The new CRST certification means a greater number of certified professionals will be joining the ranks, which creates additional momentum towards safety professionals being granted title protection, scope of practice protection and being accepted as true professionals — and to have this status recognized in provincial legislation.

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