The Reassurance of Certification

S
o much of what we do in this industry is opaque to the consumer. Anybody can buy tools and equipment, but it’s the knowledge inside technicians’ heads that is more important. Sometimes contractors need to find a way to separate out techs that know what they’re doing from those who don’t when they’re hiring a new technician, but savvy contractors can do it.

A building owner whose RTU just went out isn’t as well equipped to know what to look for. On the residential side, that’s why referral services like HomeAdvisor and Angie’s List were created. This opacity is a particular problem in areas that demand deep levels of training and experience, such as supermarket refrigeration.

That’s where certification comes in. There are a number of certification programs available in the HVACR industry, although we believe that RSES certifications are the best. HVACR practitioners who are certified earn the trust of customers and employers alike and will reap the rewards throughout their careers.

It’s not by accident that we’re highlighting certification in September as we kick off a new school year. RSES Journal is read in many tech schools, so pay attention, instructors and students!

The gold standard in certifications is the RSES Certificate Member. Certificate Membership is a classification of RSES membership that dates from 1935. The CM designation is exclusive to RSES members, and is earned after passing a killer examination. Few applicants do. The passing rate for the CM exam is currently 30%.

The CM exam covers 18 categories required to properly install and service refrigeration and air conditioning equipment. It requires a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of mechanical refrigeration theory, as well as working knowledge of installation, service and troubleshooting procedures.

And then there’s a step up. Certificate Member Specialist (CMS) is a classification available to RSES members who have already passed the CM exam. This designation is earned after successfully passing one or more difficult written examinations. There are currently eight exams, each focusing on a specialized area. The exam categories include commercial air conditioning, commercial refrigeration, controls, domestic service, dynamic compression, heating, heat pumps and HVAC electrical. RSES certifications include the industry’s best-known EPA Section 608 certification.

RSES materials have been used to certify nearly 200,000 techs in accordance with the Clean Air Act Section 608.

Take a look at another impressive set of certifications from the industrial group, Refrigerating Engineers and Technicians Association. RETA certification exams are accredited by the American National Standards Institute. The association offers two levels of ANSI-accredited certification for entry level and for experienced technicians. The first is CARO, Certified Assistant Refrigeration Operator, an entry-level credential that is designed to demonstrate that an operator has sufficient knowledge to work under supervision in industrial refrigeration. The second is CIRO, Certified Industrial Refrigeration Operator, which requires documentation of at least two years of experience as an industrial refrigeration operator.

Our coverage of several HVACR certification programs begins on page 26. Check it out. ☝

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