



Hiring an Environmental Professional for Site Assessments

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Since the environmental movement began in the 1970's, our society has had an increased need for individuals who are knowledgeable with environmental issues. Today, individuals from numerous backgrounds perform environmental services. These individuals are collectively referred to as environmental professionals (EP) (see Definitions section).

Many EPs have backgrounds in engineering, chemistry, geology, economics and social sciences. However, some individuals have received training from environmental organizations that differ greatly in terms of materials and subjects covered.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information about: 1) various types of environmental professionals, 2) when the services of an environmental professional are needed, and 3) how to find an environmental professional.

Why Services are Needed

There are many reasons that a person may require the services of an EP. Perhaps you are considering buying real estate, responding to allegations that your property is the source of some type of pollution, or simply making sure that your property or business does not violate any environmental regulations. An EP can provide a wide variety of information needed to make good decisions, including:

- * environmental audits
- * environmental site assessments
- * consulting on environmental issues

In fact, if you are considering purchasing property, you will probably need the services of an EP. Many commercial and industrial real estate transactions require that an EP perform a Phase I or Phase II environmental site assessment of the property before the transaction can take place. (See Environmental Site Assessment fact sheet C 32)

Finding an Environmental Professional

The best place to begin your search for an EP is in the Yellow Pages of the phone book. EPs can be found under several headings such as Environmental Consulting/ Services, Engineers, or Geologists. Many engineers and geologists are environmental professionals and perform a variety of environmental services. A Yellow Pages description of an engineering or geologic firm often indicates the environmental services performed.

Choosing an Environmental Professional

After locating the names of environmental consulting firms, engineers, geologists or other EPs, you must choose one. While people from many different occupations call themselves EPs, not all of these people have the same *credentials*. Credentials often vary among EPs, because there are no standard requirements necessary to become certified nor to be listed in the Yellow Pages.

An investigation of the EP's credentials and past work history is often necessary in order to ensure competency. If your EP is an engineer or a geologist, check to see if they are licensed. The licensing process is meant to protect the public from poorly trained, fraudulent, or unethical individuals. In Pennsylvania, the State Board of Professional Engineers, Geologists, and Land Surveyors maintains a roster which can be used to determine who is licensed and who is not.

While checking to see if an engineer or geologist is licensed can be relatively easy, determining the validity of an EP who received credentials from an environmental organization can be difficult. While some of these organizations have stringent *certification* requirements and are *accredited* by an accrediting body, others are not.

In order to create a uniform certification process for the EP, the American Society for Testing and

American Academy of Environmental Engineers (www.aace.net)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
IEE (Intern Envir. Eng'r)	None (n/a)	B.S. in engineering from ABET* accredited university, and EIT (Engineer-in-training) certificate, and must work in envir. eng'g firm.	None/Yes	Yes
AEE (Assoc. Envir. Eng'r)	None (n/a)	B.S. in engineering from ABET* accredited university, and a Professional Eng'r (PE) license, and must be employed in envir. eng'g firm, and qualifications judged by board of peers, a written exam, and oral exam in specialty.	None/Yes	Yes
DEE (Diplomate Envir. Eng'r)	CESB**	B.S. in engineering from ABET accredited university, and a Professional Eng'r (PE) license, and 8 years experience in envir. eng'g firm.	Yes/Yes	Yes

American Board of Industrial Hygiene (www.abih.org)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
CIH (Certified Industrial Hygienist)	CESB**	B.S. or B.A., and a minimum of 5 years experience, and a written examination.	Yes/None	Yes
CAIH (Certified Assoc. Ind. Hygienist)	CESB**	B.S. or B.A., and a minimum of 4 years experience, and a written examination.	Yes/None	Yes

The Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals (www.abcep.org)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
CEP (Certified Environmental Professional)	None currently; pending.	B.S. or B.A., and a minimum of 9 years of professional environmental work experience, 5 of which must be supervision or leadership role, and qualifications judged by a bd. of peers, based on extensive written application, five essays, 8 ltrs. of recom. from peers/clients, and an interview.	Yes/None	Yes ⁽¹⁾

Board of Certified Safety Professionals (www.bcsp.org)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
CSP (Certified Safety Professional)	CESB** NCCA***	Associate degree in safety or a B.S. or a B.A., and a minimum of 4 years experience, and two written examinations.	Yes/None	Yes
ASP (Associate Safety Professional)	CESB** NCCA***	Associate degree in safety or a B.S. or a B.A. The ASP credential is awarded as an interim designation to individuals who have passed the safety fundamentals exam.	None. Must become CSP/None	Yes

Abbreviations and note:

*ABET: Accreditation Board For Engineering and Technology (www.abet.org/)

**CESB: Council of Engineering and Scientific Speciality Boards (www.cesb.org/)

***NCCA: National Commission for Certifying Agencies (www.noca.org/ncca.htm)

(1) The Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals is currently in the process of becoming ASTM compliant

Institute of Hazardous Materials Management (www.ihmm.org)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
CHMM (Certified Haz. Mat'ls Mgr.) Master Level	CESB**	B.S. in field related to hazardous mat'ls mgmt/engr., and 7 yrs. exp. in field of hazardous mat'ls. mgmt./engr., including major responsibility for developing, implementing, directing and/or evaluating 1 or more related program activities, and a written examination.	Yes/None	Yes
CHMM (Certified Haz. Mat'ls Mgr.) Senior Level	CESB**	B.S. in a related field, and 3 years of appropriate experience, or 11 years of related experience without a B.S., and a written examination.	Yes/None	Yes

Institute of Professional Environmental Practice (www.ipep.org)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
QEP (Qualified Environmental Professional)	CESB**	Oral and written examination. <u>For oral exam</u> , candidate must meet these requirements: B.S. or B.A., and 15 yrs. prof. envir. work exp. with 10 yrs. in supervisory position, and 3 references, 1 must be from a QEP. <u>For written exam</u> , candidate must possess: B.S. or equivalent in physical, earth, or natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics, and 5 subsequent yrs. of professional work exp. or 8 subsequent yrs. prof. envir. exp. with a B.S. from a discipline other than mentioned above.	Yes/None	Yes
EPI (Environmental Professional Intern)	CESB**	College seniors in scientific major or a professional with less than 5 years of environmental work experience, and a written exam.	None/None	Yes

Environmental Assessment Association (www.iami.org/ea.cfm)

Designations	Accrediting body	Certification requirements	Recertification/ Licensing requirement	ASTM Std. Compliance
CEI (Certified Environmental Inspector)	None	Formal education in the form of a degree, or continuing education such as seminars, courses relating to environmental issues, or 2 years environmental work experience.	No/None	No
CES (Certified Environmental Specialist)	None		No/None	No
CTS (Certified Testing Specialist)	None		No/None	No
CRS (Certified Remediation Specialist)	None		No/None	No
CEM (Certified Environmental Manager)			Extensive experience (minimum of 3 years), or must be in good standing with industry & regulatory agencies, or must have worked as a manager for 3 years, and have passed certification exam.	No/None

Materials (ASTM) established an Environmental Professional Certification Accreditation Criteria Standard (E 1929-98). ASTM considers any certification bodies already accredited by the Council of Engineering and Specialty Boards (CESB) or the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) to be in compliance with this standard. The following EP certifying bodies fall into this category:

- *Institute of Professional Environmental Practice*
- *American Academy of Environmental Engineers*
- *American Board of Industrial Hygiene*
- *Board of Certified Safety Professionals*
- *Institute of Hazardous Materials Management*

While ASTM recommends standard E-1929-98 for the certification of EPs, certifying organizations are not required to become accredited. Furthermore, these organizations are not required to follow the certification recommendations set forth in the standard. If the EP has received a specialized title such as Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) or Certified Environmental Inspector (CEI), it is important to examine the organization that granted these titles.

There are currently eight organizations that offer EP certification programs. Table 1 provides a summary of these organizations. As seen in this table, since there are no standard accreditation criteria for EPs, the certification requirements across organizations can be very different.

Discussion

What does hiring an EP mean to you? EP's can provide a number of valuable services such as environmental site assessments, environmental audits, consulting and other environmental services. However, an environmental audit or an ESA is only as reliable as the person who performs it. Hiring a competent EP is essential to receiving quality services. Investigating the credentials of an EP is the first step in hiring a competent individual. If the EP is an engineer or geologist, Pennsylvania law requires a license in order to provide engineering or geologic services. If the EP has received

his or her credentials from an environmental organization, it is wise to investigate the organization that granted his or her title. Ask:

What type of qualifications must a person possess to be admitted to this organization?

What are the organization's requirements for certification (testing, experience, etc.) and recertification?

Is the organization accredited by an accrediting body such as the CESB?

Ask the EP for a list of references. Speaking with people that the EP has provided services for can give valuable insight into the quality of work that the individual has performed.

Definitions

Accreditation: the recognition of a certification body as conforming to specific standards used to qualify individuals receiving certification for practice in a specialty area.

Certification: a process that affirms that a person has met the necessary requirements to practice in a certain field or occupation.

Credentials: a title (such as PE for professional engineer) signifying that a person is knowledgeable on subjects related to the title.

Environmental Professional: A person, usually with an environmental background, that performs environmental services.

Recertification: a process that requires that a person demonstrate their competency in their field or occupation after becoming certified.

Further Reading

ASTM Environmental Professional Certification Accreditation Criteria Standard (E 1929-98) (www.astm.org)

Environmental Site Assessments: A Wise Investment (ABE fact sheet C 32)

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.