



Cycletime Tips – General

Volume 9: The SPE Plastics Technologist Certification Program

By John McDonnell

There are a lot of questions being asked about the Plastics Technologist Certification and Recertification program initiated by the Society of Plastics Engineers¹ (SPE). General Polymers Technical Service Reps agree that there is a strong need for technical education, and the SPE Plastics Technologist Certification program is a step in the right direction. The National Institute for Certification of Engineering Technologies (NICET) will administer these exams. We would like to thank the SPE for allowing us to publish the following SPE Certification Program for you in this month's CycleTime TIPS.

What is Certification?

Certification is the formal recognition by a cognizant peer group that an applicant has demonstrated through examination and submission of qualifications comprehension of and proficiency in a uniquely defined body of knowledge. The certification process also provides for an individual's continued professional growth through recertification. Certification should not be confused with licensing, a process that each state uses to grant licenses to engineers to permit them to practice in that state. Nor should it be confused with accreditation, which is a form of "vouching for" in some official capacity. Accreditation is similar to certification but pertains to a program or institution rather than in individual (e.g. ABET accredits plastics engineering programs).

What is the purpose of Certification?

The purpose of the Plastics Technologist Certification Program is to recognize and document the skills and competencies of individuals in the area of plastics technology. Perhaps the most important aspect of SPE's certification program is the recertification component. Participation in professional development and continuing education activities keeps individuals informed of the rapidly changing state-of-the-art technologies in the plastics industry.

What does certification mean for the individual?

Certification has many benefits, including:

- It identifies practitioners who have achieved a specific level of knowledge, skills, and competencies, and provides documentation of their achievement to customers, employers and colleagues.
- It adds credibility and stature to the profession.
- It gives practitioners incentive to increase their competence and continue their education.
- It can help increase the self-esteem of certified practitioners and their sense of identification with the certified group.

- It encourages practitioners to keep pace with state-of-the-art technology by enhancing their skills and knowledge.

How does an individual become Certified?

Certification is earned by: 1) Successfully completing the Plastics Technologist exam, and 2) Attaining a combination of six experience credits. Experience credits are the accumulation of a) years worked as a plastics technologist or similar plastics related work (1 year = 1 experience credit), and/or b) highest education level earned in engineering or related field (Assoc. Degree = 2 experience credits, Bachelors Degree or higher = 4 experience credits). Certification will be awarded to those who meet the above criterion and is granted for a period of three years...while transitioning to the Recertification Process.

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