

From: Sapsis Rigging - netHEADS <netHEADS@sapsis-rigging.com>
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The Occasional When-we-feel-like-it
Email Newsletter from Sapsis Rigging, Inc.
019 April 2005

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Memo from Uncle Bill...Rigging Certification

Pssst. Hey you. Yeah, you. Come here for a sec. Wanna have some fun? Like to see some sparks fly? Here's what you do. The next time you're doing a load in at the arena, take a stroll over to Rigging Land during a coffee break. Make sure you wait till one or two of the guys have coffee cups up to their mouths, and then casually drop the word "certification" into the conversation. Then duck or you might end up wearing some of that coffee.

Just what is it with you guys and certification, anyway? Why is it such a hot topic? Everyone I talk with has an opinion, and there doesn't seem to be any middle ground. People either love the idea or hate it. (Sounds like a recent election, eh?) My impression is that some folks don't understand the concept of certification or have a good sense for how it might affect them. For what it's worth, I have some first-hand knowledge on the subject and think a little Who, What, When Where & Why might be in order.

What exactly is certification? Certification is a tool used to measure how much a person knows about a particular job or task and how well they can perform the duties of that job or task. In other words, it's a way of finding out whether you really know what you are doing. The method most commonly used to establish a certification is a test.

The Why is easy. Look around you. Do you see shows getting smaller? Do you see shows getting less complicated? No, of course not. The American public is well known for it's "bigger and flashier than last year" mentality and we, as an industry, feed into it. So now instead of 15 - 20 trucks at your loading dock door, you now have 35-50. And you now have more 2-ton hoists on a show than you had 1/2-tons the year before. I mean look at some of this stuff. A hoist failure these days could get downright nasty.

Let's be honest with ourselves. We've got a bunch of riggers running around the country who profess to know what they are doing. A lot of them do and some, unfortunately, do not. Wouldn't it be nice to know who is who? As a professional rigger wouldn't you want to confirm what you do know and what you only thought you knew? Wouldn't it be better to discover you were wrong about something on a test rather than in the Super Dome? (Yeah, it would.) That's where the certification comes in. The test will help riggers identify their strong points and their weak ones and will help the rest of the country know who has the level of experience for the job at hand.

The 'who' is actually a two-parter. There's the 'Who is putting the certification program together' part and the 'Who is taking the test' part.

The folks over at ESTA (Entertainment Services & Technology Association www.esta.org) have put together the Entertainment Technician Certification Program (ETCP) and charged that program with the task of developing certifications. The ETCP is made up of two groups: the Certification Council and the Working Groups. Both groups are made up of a bunch of hardworking individuals who have donated their time and money to make sure this program comes out right.

You have to know that developing a certification program is damned hard work. Many of the people involved have been at it since 2001. We didn't know then how involved the process was going to be or how long it would take, but we've stuck it out. The meetings have sometimes been, er, um...interesting, but the overriding goal has always been to develop a program that works. It has to be honest, fair and must accurately reflect the level of professionalism that this industry requires, and that takes time.

Another group of people who have recently signed on to help us with this program are the Subject Matter Experts (SME). This is a group of riggers who have been chosen to help write the test. They, along with the certification administration company that's been hired to shepherd us through all this, have been meeting to develop a job analysis and task delineation to insure that the tests accurately reflect what riggers actually do. (By the way, the certification administration company is made up of people who are called psychometricians. Honest!)

The ETCP, in answer to the second part of the 'Who' question, has determined that the first round of certifications will be for riggers and electricians. The Rigging Skills Working Group (RSWG) has determined that there will be two certifications in the first go-round: one for Arena Style rigging and one for Theatrical Style. The Arena style test will be directed toward those who work the high steel and those who supervise. The Theatrical Certification will encompass those folks who work as a flyperson on load-ins and load-outs and also those who run shows. The electricians certification will most likely target Master Electricians and those who are responsible for doing temporary power tie-ins.. This is not to say that there won't be other certifications in the future. I'm, sure there will be, but this is what we felt we could handle at this stage of the game. The first set of tests for riggers is scheduled for the fall of 2005.

Lastly, here's my impassioned plea for this program. You can probably tell that I am strongly in favor of certification, but don't take my word for it. Between the Council, the RSWG and the ESTA administration, there are about 100 people who also strongly believe in this program. Ask some of them. They have put their brains, muscle and money into it knowing this is a program that we desperately need. The events of the summer of 2003 alone should make it very clear why we need this program. (In case you had forgotten, there were a couple of spectacular truss failures.) We all know we've been very lucky so far, but we cannot continue to rely solely on luck. Will certification stop all accidents? No, unfortunately, it won't, but a certification program will help us better identify the problem areas we have and help us avoid the catastrophic accidents that we most certainly will have without it.

Certification is a train on the right track at the right time. When it pulls out of the station, I'll be on board. I think you should be, too.

Thanks

Be well

Bill

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For more Uncle Bill visit the Uncle Bill Archives <http://www.sapsis-rigging.com/UB.ArticleIndex.html> and catch up on those veritable pearls o' wisdom from our favorite rigging master.

ETCP Candidate Handbook Now Available

As many of you may know, I have been involved in the development of the ETCP rigging certification for some time now. At the USITT conference in Toronto last week the ETCP Candidate Handbook was unveiled. This handbook offers all the information you should need to decide if you wish to take either the Arena Rigging certification test, the Theatre Rigging certification test...or both. It also gives you the forms to register for the tests.

The handbook is available in print from from ESTA and is also available as a downloadable pdf at the ESTA website <http://www.etcpc.org>

And, of course, if you have any questions that you want to direct to me, please feel free to do so.

Thanks for your support.

Bill

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Featured Product: RigRight Book & Software by Harry Donovan

RigRight is a computer program that computes and adjusts rigging geometry and forces, calculates positions, lengths, and forces for bridles, breastlines and deadhangs. It manages any number of loads simultaneously, of any weight and at any location, rigged from beams at any location. It does solutions in both 2 and 3 dimensions. Individual solutions can be adjusted to fit a particular situation. It supports files of beams and show rigging points. Solutions can be viewed individually, printed, recorded, and exported in spreadsheet form singly or as part of a group.

What comes with the software? You get the Complete Rigging System, consisting of the 710-page book Entertainment Rigging, two laminated reference cards, RigRight 1.0 on CD, and a comprehensive 87-page manual.□

System Requirements:

RigRight 1.0 runs in Windows 98, 2000, and XP. It needs 20 MB of RAM, 10 MB space on the hard drive, and a screen resolution of 800 x 600 or higher.

Code: 12-03-99-1269

Price: \$430.60

Order from our Online Catalog□

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Baby News

Jeff Holt announces the birth of

Dylan Jefferson Holt

born 8/15/04, 7#, 14oz., 21"

eats basic solid food, breast milk, sleeps through the night, now has 2 lower teeth cut and has a strangely early

fascination with pictures of Marilyn Monroe.

* * * * *

Brad, Tracie, Micah Pope are proud to announce the birth of
Bryce Vail Pope
January 17, 2005
4:15 am
7 lbs. 15.25 ounces, 21 inches
Red Hair
Good lookin'
Good eatin'
Healthy Boy and Mom

Long Reach Long Riders

Out of the Wings and Into the Wind

Bill "Uncle Bill" Sapsis and the Long Reach Long Riders proudly announce their second annual charity motorcycle ride benefiting Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS (BC/EFA) is the nation's leading industry-based, not-for-profit AIDS fundraising and grant making organization. BC/EFA is the on-going, committed response from the American Theatre community to an urgent worldwide health crisis. Since its founding in 1988, BC/EFA has raised over \$50 million for critically needed services for people with AIDS, HIV or HIV-related illnesses.

Although the ride began as a one-time fundraiser among like-minded technical theatre artists, the Long Riders made an impact beyond their wildest expectations. Bill's initial statement that "Time and again, those who perform in the spotlight have answered the call to raise money for worthy causes. Now it's our turn" proved to be right on target. Over 200 individual and corporate sponsors jumped in to make the fundraiser a great success.

So we're doing it again.

This year's ride, "Out of the Wings and Into the Wind", has all the excitement (and then some) that can be provided by an energetic group of artists and artisans who love to see this great country from the saddle of a motorcycle.

Two major changes will distinguish this year's run from last year. First, the Long Reach Long Riders are reaching out beyond their core group and looking for riders (and fundraisers!) from within and outside the entertainment community.

Secondly, this year's ride will be two-pronged, making it easier for people on either side of the country to join in the fun. One group will leave from Washington DC, and, on the same day, the other will leave from San Diego, CA. The two groups will meet in Hays, Kansas, and then head north for a few days in and around Rapid City, South Dakota, where they'll pack in as much riding and sightseeing as they can before splitting off and heading home.

All donations to this ride are tax deductible.

For more information, visit the **The Long Reach Long Riders Website**

<http://www.sapsis-rigging.com/LRLR.html>

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