

Mold Certified or Not?

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In a recent article that I contributed, I spoke of what you need to do if you discover mold in your home or business. The answer in short was to hire a certified and knowledgeable indoor environmental professional to come and inspect your home or business. What I did not discuss in detail was what certified really means. In March of this year, breaking news hit the indoor air quality industry that will help in defining an individual that holds a training certificate versus an individual who holds a professional certification.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Organization For Competency Assurance (NOCA) published the ANSI/NOCA Standard 1100 in March of 2009. The standard carefully distinguishes training certificates (referred to as “assessment-based certificates”) from professional certification programs and explains key differences between the two. There has been mass confusion within our industry for years that has caused many issues between competing industry certification programs, which this new standard now clarifies.

So what is the difference? According to the ANSI/NOCA, a training certificate is awarded to someone who attends a particular course of instruction and passes a test based on that course. A professional certification, on the other hand, is awarded to someone who passes an examination based on broad industry knowledge that is independent of training courses or course providers.

Does this all matter? In section 8, the standard stipulates that holders of training certificates may NOT use letters or acronyms behind their name, nor may they use the word “certified” in describing their credentials. The use of these is reserved to holders of professional certifications as defined in the standard. This is an extremely important development for the indoor air quality industry and also you as the consumer hiring a “certified” mold professional. ANSI/NOCA 1100 suggests that the “certifications” offered by many IAQ organizations today are training certificates only, and that those organizations are misleading.

The ANSI/NOCA standard does not condemn all IAQ certifying bodies, however. Organizations whose policies qualify them as certification programs under Standard 1100 include the American Board of Industrial Hygiene (ABIH), which offers the CIH (Certified Industrial Hygienist) designation, the American IAQ Council, which offers the CIEC/CIE (Certified Indoor Environmentalist Consultant/ Certified Indoor Environmentalist), CMRS/CMR (Certified Microbial Remediation Supervisor/ Certified Microbial Remediator), and CMC/CMI (Certified Microbial Consultant/Certified Microbial Investigator) designations, and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals,

which offers the CSP (Certified Safety Professional) designation. None of these organizations develops or requires specific training courses as prerequisites to certification.

ABIH, the American IAQ Council, and the Board of Certified Safety Professionals are also among the only IAQ groups to achieve third party accreditation for their certification programs. That is because all national accreditation bodies serving the indoor air quality field strictly prohibit accredited programs from developing, approving, or delivering certification prep courses.

So what does all of this mean to the consumer? It is protection for you in hiring an actual “certified” professional that has credentials and broad industry knowledge, not just a run-of-the-mill individual that decided to jump on the “mold bandwagon.” When hiring an indoor environmental professional, you should ask them if they are certified, and by what organization. Make sure that they are insured as well. Accidents happen, and you should not be responsible for paying for somebody else’s mistake.