

SEEING RED FLAGS:

Below are some common claims in the safety and health “business”. We believe it is important for consumers of safety products and services to be aware of some of these claims and the truth behind them.

This (course, consultant, service, program) is OSHA (certified or approved).

This is a common claim for both products and individuals. OSHA does **NOT** certify any product, service, course or individual. There are such things as OSHA-authorized trainers that provide OSHA courses that have been designed by OSHA. These trainers are not permitted to call the course, nor themselves, “certified”, but many do. High Safety Consulting Services, Ltd., through arrangements with the Keystone Occupational Safety and Health Center delivers authorized-instructor trainer programs for the OSHA training institute as well as OSHA courses under the Institute’s guidelines.

Our firm is certified to do mold remediation / testing.

Currently in Pennsylvania and nationally there is no recognized certification body for mold testing. There are many firms that offer “certified” training. Individuals attending these courses are then deemed as mold or indoor air quality experts. Unfortunately, many of these individuals have limited understanding of health and safety issues. In some cases, the instructors have no recognized certifications or education to be conducting these “certification” programs. Testing may or may not be a component of these types of programs. Almost anyone can be trained to collect a mold sample. The most significant designation in this field is the CIH – Certified Industrial Hygienist.

An individual is ‘certified’ as a safety engineer, technician, or manager.

In the safety and health field there are many certification programs available. Some require the applicant to submit a form with some money and voilà! “They are certified”. The most recognized and most sought after certifications are also the hardest to obtain. For this reason some individuals are not able to pass the testing requirements or meet the educational requirements for these designations.

Qualified consultants in industrial hygiene will have a CIH designation (Certified Industrial Hygienist). This designation requires a BS degree in the sciences from an ABET accredited college, five years work experience in industrial hygiene, professional references, and passing a seven-hour examination which has a pass rate of 34%.

Qualified consultants in safety will have a CSP designation (Certified Safety Professional). This designation requires a BS degree or an Associate's degree with a safety and health focus, professional references, four years of safety experience, and completion of two tests (ASP and CSP exam) which have pass rates of 46% and 57% respectively.

Other valid certifications and recognized programs include the CPE (Certified Professional Ergonomist) or P.E. (Professional Engineer) in the area of safety and health. These are the cornerstones for certification in the safety and health profession. There are many other certifications available. Most do not have the same level of validation, testing or education requirements.

OSHA or Safety Education Course Offerings:

Beyond looking at the cost, look at the instructors and their credentials. An OSHA course instructor is required to attend a four day session and have a few years of experience. This level of education is a bit different than what experienced and qualified trainers can offer their audience in depth. Beware of educational programs **that don't provide any information on the instructor!** These are companies that contract the lowest cost instructor in the area. If you intend to take one of these courses, ask for a complete bio of the instructor, and then decide.

Selecting the "cheapest" consultant:

Comparing hourly rates of consultants is important, but don't stop there! "You get what you pay for", can play out to be very true. Time and time again, I have recognized that applying the proper expertise to a problem initially, will save lots of time and money. We have solved problems for clients in 15 minutes where other consultants have already invoiced thousands of dollars trying to determine what was wrong. In mold remediation projects, we have saved insurance companies millions of dollars in taking a sound scientific, but pragmatic approach to control. We deliver what is needed without inflating the project unnecessarily.

Consulting rates are high:

Consider that you pay a plumber or a mechanic \$65 an hour to perform his or her trade. These trades are very valuable and they do not require extensive insurance coverage nor do they require advanced education with extensive experience (although we'd like our plumber to have those additional components). Consider that a good attorney will invoice at \$300 per hour for his or her services. It stands to reason that a reasonable consulting fee for a qualified safety and health consultant (with insurance) would range between these two figures. A little bit of time and direction from a consultant can help keep you on the right path that can be much more costly.

In a training environment, remember that for every hour of presentation, approximately 1 to 2 hours go into the preparation of the session. In many cases the cost to pay the employees to take the training is greater than the actual training fee paid to the consultant. Since there is a big investment of employee's time, it makes sense that you want to have effective and quality training presented.

We have a monthly retainer program so that you can call on us whenever you need us:

In meeting with potential customers, I have found that a few consultants will develop a retainer agreement. In this agreement, the client pays something every month or every quarter. In return, they can get services when they need them. Most customers I have talked with have been disappointed with this arrangement. They pay a fee, for no or very little service. I believe this type of system makes a consulting group inherently lazy. There is no incentive to perform for the consultant. There is money coming in every period with no defined services. Great for the consultant -- not for the client. We do not use this approach. We may put together a work plan and invoice as we complete the plan. Invoices should always be tied to specific service delivery. I have yet to find a client that was pleased with this type of arrangement.

“Your employees have an over-exposure to Chemical Di-Ethyl-Amyl-Tetra-Heptane (DEATH for short) and they should wear respirators”.

Recommendations that use personal protective equipment (PPE) as a solution are generally not well thought out. PPE (hearing protectors, respirators, gloves) are necessary at some points, but they are the last line of defense. Your consultant should recommend other controls before telling you to slap a protective device on a co-worker. If PPE is recommended, the recommendation should state that no other practical engineering or administrative controls could be used.

I don't understand what the data means

If a consulting report doesn't clearly explain the problem and the solution, then it is of little value to you. Ask for copies of prior reports (neutered) to get a sense of what you can expect. If the data are not presented clearly or conclusions from the data are not clear, you should ask for further explanation and a revised report.



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