

Competent person vs. Qualified vs. Certified vs. Designated

Competent Person

An OSHA “competent person” is defined as “one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them”. [29 CFR 1926.32(f)]. By way of training and/or experience, a competent person is knowledgeable of applicable standards, is capable of identifying workplace hazards relating to the specific operation, and has the authority to correct them. Some standards add additional specific requirements which must be met by the competent person.

OK this sounds like common sense until we read further and find this statement: “There are currently no specific standards regarding competent persons.” WHAT?? No standards – you’ve got standards for everything else!

Qualified Person (29 CFR 1926.32(m))

“Qualified” means one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training, and experience, has successfully demonstrated his ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work, or the project.

Designated Person

The term “designated” personnel means employees selected or assigned by the employer or the employer’s representative as being qualified to perform specific duties.

So what’s the common thread here? Knowledge gained by Safety Training.

Many standards promulgated by OSHA explicitly require you to train your employees in the safety and health aspects of their jobs. Other OSHA standards make it the employer’s responsibility to limit certain job assignments to employees who are “certified,” “competent,” or “qualified” – meaning that they have had special previous training, in or out of the workplace.

See, OSHA’s belief is that training is an essential part of your safety and health program for protecting workers from injuries and illnesses. This philosophy is further proven by the fact that statistics show those who are new on the job have a higher rate of accidents and injuries than more experienced workers.

Final word here is that Safety Training in the proper performance of a job is time and money well spent, and the employer might regard it as an investment rather than an expense. An effective program of safety and health training for workers can result in fewer injuries and illnesses, better morale, and lower insurance premiums, among other benefits.

COMPETENT vs. QUALIFIED vs. CERTIFIED Person.

“Competent Person means one who is capable of identifying existing and predictable hazards in the surroundings or working conditions which are unsanitary, hazardous, or dangerous to employees, and who has authorization to take prompt corrective measures to eliminate them.”

Well what does all this mean? Let's suppose for example that you are the storekeeper at your shop with responsibility for assigning rigging gear. If you are capable of recognizing that a sling has been damaged and you also have the authority to remove it from service, you could be considered a competent person, regardless of experience or training. It is unlikely that you would be qualified without training or experience in rigging gear inspection or as part of a rigger training.

In general, a person who has knowledge relative to the situation and authority to take corrective measures will be a competent person under this definition.

“Qualified Person means a person who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training and experience, successfully demonstrated the ability to solve/resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work, or the project.”

To explain qualified person we need to break down definition. A recognized degree in structural engineering may indicate that a person is qualified to analyze a boom deficiency for example. A degree in a non-related field would not. A certificate of training, would have to be in a related field to be an indication of qualification. A certificate of crane operator training may not prove that a person is a qualified rigger.

A journeyman rigger with 25 years of experience may have learned the trade from more experienced riggers over time without any formal rigger training, and yet he may well demonstrate the ability to solve problems associated with rigging and therefore be a qualified rigger.

A “Certified Person” is one who has passed stringent written and practical exams related to the work that he will perform. OSHA requires the organization providing the examinations be accredited by an accrediting agency such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA). Certification testing for crane operators, riggers and signalpersons are offered by accredited organizations including the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) and others. Becket Training & Consulting offers training and testing for candidates pursuing NCCCO certification.