



# NSPS

## CERTIFIED SURVEY TECHNICIAN PROGRAM

### Who's Using it and Why?

**Above:** All of Washington D.C.'s Metro surveyors are CSTs, or licensed, or both. Matt Whitehead and Dave Simms just completed CST testing for Level I.

**W**ith so much emphasis being placed these days on enhanced professional standing of surveying through the development of educational opportunities in our four-year university programs, it is sometimes easy to overlook a significant segment of the profession. That segment is the multitude of technicians who every day collect and process the data on which we, the professional surveyors, base and form our opinions.

As we pursue and encourage the concept of a four-year degree require-

ment for licensure, it is important that we also plan for the career advancement of those who, for whatever reasons, will not attain that status. We must understand that the incentive and initiative necessary to keep our invaluable technicians in the business can only be recognized if a clear career path has been defined. A uniformly recognized method for documenting one's progress and achievements can be a major factor in this process.

Certification is used by many organizations to acknowledge, through testing or some other mechanism, that someone has met requirements it has set forth for a

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A Metro train whizzes past as Matt Whitehead, Dave Simms and Teresa Combs perform a peg test with a digital level.

particular activity. Certification is not the same as licensure, which bestows upon one the right to provide a service to the public in return for acceptance of the responsibility and liability associated with that right. It does, however, provide credibility for the person holding the certification.

It is within the context of providing both a credential and an evaluation tool that the Certified Survey Technician (CST) Program, run through NSPS, was created. The program has been in existence for several years and has generated a great deal of interest from employers,

## A CST certification on a resume is useful when evaluating the capabilities of a prospective employee.

Likewise, certification is a tool that can be used by anyone who wishes to purchase something for which the value may be subjective. In surveying, a certification statement on a plat, signed by the surveyor, indicates that the service provided in order to create the plat was conducted at a level of high professionalism and quality.

technician level employees, and those who procure surveying services. A company owner can now have the ability to better gauge an applicant's capabilities by using the CST Program than is typically possible through what is written on a resume. Likewise, those seeking employment need a credential to show that they have achieved recognition for



a certain level of competence. These are among the many factors that make the CST Program a meaningful benefit to the surveying profession.

Another aspect of the CST Program is that it can serve as the basis for a career track for the technician level employees who may not have the opportunity to achieve the professional surveyor level because of existing or impending laws requiring a four-year degree. The CST Program should be promoted as a benefit to members who can offer it to their employees at a reduced rate. Building a career track for technicians is critical to the future of the surveying profession because people need to have documentation that they have reached a particular level of competence. Without that documentation, the incentive to not only progress, but also just to stay in the profession may not exist.

For example Ron Collier, Survey Division Manager for Charles P.

Johnson and Associates in Silver Spring, Maryland, is using the CST Program for several purposes. With the advances in equipment today, field crew personnel and survey technicians are not exposed to or taught a lot of the basics. Most surveyors have not taken any exams since they graduated high school. The CST Exam is a great tool to get them back into a test-taking mode. They have recently tested 13 individuals in their office. Over the last few years they have tested up to 25 people, and one employee is now a Level IV CST. Charles P. Johnson provides in-house training for their employees. Ron says, "We emphasize the idea that the more that you know and can do, the more valuable you are to the firm." He goes on, "I believe that this is the best tool that we have today to promote the profession within and to build a much stronger work force."

Evan Brown, Project Manager for Britt Surveying, Inc. in Venice, Florida, is using the CST Program to train and advance their staff. They are using in-house workshops for employees to



Teresa Combs, Party Chief CST Level II, is preparing for the Level III exam.

## Building a career track for technicians is critical to the future of the surveying profession.

share knowledge and learn from senior staff members, and also encourage staff to participate in educational seminars hosted by the Florida Surveying and Mapping Society (FSMS). Britt Surveying is a steadfast supporter of the CST Program. They also offer a financial bonus and opportunity for advancement to individuals who attain certification.

One of the major supporters of the CST Program has been McKim and Creed. They have tested employees from Florida, the Carolinas, and Virginia. They use the CST Program to provide a career ladder for their technicians. They currently offer bonuses for the different levels of achievement. Currently, more than 160 employees have taken the CST Exam from McKim and Creed. They offer study sessions for the staff and have created a study manual on all of the different levels.

Barry Savage, President and Adjunct Faculty at Cleveland State Community College and owner of Savage Surveying and Mapping, says "The CST Program insures a standard skill-set for employees that I can depend on." He encourages all employees and students to take the CST. They have an education reimbursement program for employees to encourage certification.

As you can see, survey managers and business owners use the CST Program to help survey technicians with their career development. Certification also provides employers with credentials to offer clients and a means to evaluate and promote personnel. Those familiar with the CST Program know that it becomes more than just a test because of the training and development conducted by organizations in preparation for the exam. While studying, surveying technicians become familiar

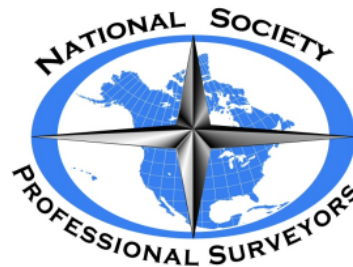


with the academic knowledge behind the field procedures they follow every day. By advancing through the CST Program, a survey technician moves progressively into more responsible positions. Having gained confidence, some technicians will hit the books even harder and go after the Fundamentals of Land Surveying Exam. This grassroots movement is a way to help technicians become professionals.

With the help of many volunteers across the county, the CST Board, and the leadership within NSPS in particular, the program has made great strides. This is a program that deserves to be encouraged and utilized by the surveying community. *AS*

**Lee Canfield** is the Education Program Coordinator for NSPS and is responsible for the administration of the CST Program.

# CERTIFIED SURVEY TECHNICIAN (CST) PROGRAM



*INCREASE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES BY BECOMING A CERTIFIED SURVEY TECHNICIAN*

**ASK THE  
QUESTION**

**ARE YOU A CST?**

- Provide a Career Ladder for Technicians
- Provide Credentials to Technicians
- Provide a Standard Way to Evaluate Staff and New Applicants
- Can Be Used as an Assessment Tool in Conjunction with Survey Education Programs

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