

REGISTERED VS. CERTIFIED

by Jerome P. Schmidt

Since early 1994, ABSA has had a program for Registered Biological Safety Professionals (RBPs). To date, more than 50 individuals have been registered. Our expectation that Registration would be valuable has been strongly affirmed by the increasing number of requests from employers for RBPs. In October of this year ABSA will initiate a program for Certified Biological Safety Professionals. The purpose of this article is to discuss the salient features of these two programs and point out their differences as well their similarities. It is expected that this program will generate even more interest than that for Registration.

The Registration Program is operated and administered entirely by ABSA. The Certification program, on the other hand, will be administered by the National Registry of Microbiologists (NRM), which was established in 1958 under the auspices of the prestigious American Academy of Microbiology. The NRM has certified microbiologists in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and on six continents. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) is the parent organization of both the Academy and NRM. Both programs are open to all eligible applicants, whether they are members of

ABSA or ASM, and the application fee is \$75 for either. Perhaps the most important difference between Registration and Certification is that Certification requires the applicant to successfully pass a written examination. That is, applicants for Certification are tested for competence and specific knowledge, whereas applicants for Registration qualify on the basis of credentials (education, experience and references). A further difference between the two programs is that it is possible to become a RBP without having Baccalaureate degree, if the applicant has at least 13 years of professional biological safety experience. The minimum eligibility requirement for Certification is a BS/BA in Biological Sciences, with seven years experience. In addition, Certification requires a minimum of 20 semester hours in microbiology.

Individuals may apply for Registration at any time, but the examination for Certification will be offered only once a year.

For more information regarding Registration, please contact the ABSA National Office at 847-949-1517. For more information regarding Certification, please contact the NRM at 202-737-3600.

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