



# THE CERTIFIER

THE Newsletter for Environmental Certification Authorities

## A Message from ABC's PRESIDENT

John Solvie, City of Las Vegas, Environmental Division; Las Vegas, Nevada



As 2010 draws to a close, I am grateful for the unwavering dedication of so many who make ABC the world class organization it is today. This year's

Board of Directors represent the finest group of professionals I have ever had the pleasure of serving with. ABC's staff and new industry partners represent broad and diverse expertise, and are committed to meeting the ever-changing needs of our members. Our committee chairs and subject matter experts

(President continued on page 6)

## Exam Development Series

### 2011 Exam Development Initiatives Include Striving to Meet Internationally Recognized Certification Standard

Dedicated to enhancing the mission that brought ABC together, in 2010 ABC's Board of Directors established partnerships and set in motion activities to strengthen the organization's testing service and member programs.

ABC President John Solvie explains that the Board of Directors' strategic focus this year has been raising ABC's psychometric bar to maintain stride with today's demanding certification and testing standards. This resulted in establishing a symbiotic industry partnership with Professional Testing, Inc. for psychometric oversight of ABC's Validation and Examination Committee exam development process. Solvie says upcoming activities will center on strengthening all aspects of ABC's Testing Service.

"For our members, it means significantly enhancing the integrity and legal defensibility of ABC's standardized exams," he said. "The

Board of Directors is also pursuing full accreditation of its enhanced exam psychometrics through the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024."

The international standard ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 is one of two accreditation programs for personnel certification agencies administered by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). ANSI is the only personnel certification accreditation body in the United States to meet nationally accepted practices for accreditation bodies. Adherence to a rigorous internationally recognized accreditation process ensures that the ANSI process conforms to the highest accreditation standard and represents the best practices in accreditation. Close to one million professionals currently hold certifications from organizations accredited under ANSI's personnel certification programs.

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## TESTING SERVICE UPDATE

### ABC Calling on All Stakeholders to Participate in New Job Task Analysis

ABC is requesting your assistance with the 2010 Job Task Analysis (JTA) surveys for Water Treatment, Distribution, Wastewater Treatment and Collection Operators. The JTA surveys are a critical step in developing new and legally validated standardized certification exams that will be released for use by ABC's Testing Clients in 2011. The following Q&A discusses upcoming steps of ABC's continued focus on its Testing Services.

#### How can I participate in the JTA's?

To view more information on the surveys, visit [www.abccert.org](http://www.abccert.org), and click on the links found on the homepage. The surveys will remain open until Dec. 23, 2010. The survey is open to all stakeholders, including operators, engineers, regulators, utility managers, cer-

tification board members, municipal managers, and retired personnel.

#### Why are we conducting revalidation surveys?

After the Board of Directors reviewed the results of a spring 2010 third-party psychometric audit (for more information, see the summer edition of the *Certifier*), it was determined that revalidation surveys will strengthen our testing service and prepare ABC for accreditation in compliance with the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 certification standard. (To learn more about the ANSI certification standard, see the *Exam Development Series*).

The Job Task Analyses used to develop (Testing Service Update continued on page 4)

## WHAT'S INSIDE

This edition of *The Certifier* holds the latest in certification news and events, including:

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## Introducing ABC's Psychometric Partner: Professional Testing, Inc.

Throughout the past few months, ABC Validation & Examination (V&E) committees along with ABC testing staff have been working closely with Professional Testing, Inc. (*To learn more about Professional Testing staff, read the bios below*). With the psychometric expertise of examination development of Professional Testing, ABC staff, Board of Directors, Councils and Committees can focus on serving the program needs of our members and clients.

As ABC continues implementation of the Testing Service Development Plan, Professional Testing psychometricians are assisting ABC's V&E committees and staff with the

following activities:

- **Re-organization of Item Banks in preparation for an ANSI assessment**
- **Preparation and distribution of WT, Dist, WWT, Coll revalidation surveys**
- **Draft exam blueprints based on revalidation survey data**
- **Review and finalize exam blueprints with V&E Committee Members**
- **Exam Development and Item Review Orientation for V&E Committee Members - overview of industry best practices for test development, discussion of JTA process, validity and reliability**
- **Assisting V&E Committees with reviewing exam forms and verify items'**

- **reclassifications to revised blueprints**
- **Identify gaps in item bank inventory and conduct any necessary item writing workshops**

In partnership with Professional Testing Inc. our V&E committees have unprecedented access to psychometric experts to assist in every access of exam development and implementation.

This partnership enables us to fulfill our commitment to our members and clients of providing them the best service and products in the business.

### Building Industry Partnerships

Meet two staff from Professional Testing working with ABC volunteers and staff in implementation of the Testing Service Development Plan

#### Christine Niero, PhD



Dr. Niero is the Vice President, Professional Certification and Client Development, and heads the Washington D.C. office for Professional Testing, Inc. Dr. Niero is a senior executive who brings over

twenty years of experience in credentialing and non-profit management with a record of highly successful client outcomes. Dr. Niero has demonstrated skills and expertise in developing and implementing viable credentialing programs, policy development, establishing operational and governance structures, optimizing

management functions, leadership development, strategic planning, standard setting and accreditation. Dr. Niero has directed certification programs national in scope and at entry and advanced/specialty levels. Her expertise in credentialing and management has enabled certification programs to sustain significant growth and earn industry recognition. Dr. Niero's experiences also include representing certification at the level of federal policy and governance, as well as at the state level of recognizing and utilizing professional certification programs.

A recognized leader, Dr. Niero frequently provides presentations on the topic of certification, and has presented at major industry

meetings such as the Association of Test Publishers, (ATP), the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA), the Council on Licensure Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR), the American Society for Association Executives (ASAE), and the Metropolitan DC area Certification Networking Group. Dr. Niero serves as the Vice Chair of the Personnel Certification Accreditation Committee (PCAC) for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) world standard for personnel certification, ISO/IEC 17024. Dr. Niero is well versed in the development and implementation of accreditation standards and the establishment of best certification practices for credentialing boards.

#### Fae Mellichamp, M.S.



Fae Mellichamp began her career in psychometrics working with the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation where she was responsible for development of a wide

variety of state licensure examinations, including such diverse areas as construction, podiatric medicine, electroly-

sis, landscape architecture, opticianry, and more. She has hands on experience with all phases of examination development, including developing RFPs, writing proposals, conducting job analyses, developing examination specifications, managing item banks, scoring, equating, and statistical analyses. She was instrumental in developing the Department's ADA accommodation application process during the early 1990's. After twelve years with the State of Florida, she joined

Professional Testing, Inc. in 2001 where she serves as Senior Psychometrician, managing examination programs for a variety of groups including Behavior Analysts, FL Construction Industry, Certified Dental Technologists, and Cardiovascular Credentialing International. In 2004, Fae served as the lead editor for the Revised Edition of CLEAR's "The Americans with Disabilities Act: Information for Credentialing Examinations."

## Certification Program Administration Roundtable to Discuss Best Practices

An Operator Certification Program Administration Best Practices Roundtable held during the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be an interactive discussion on developing best practices for certification programs, an effort the Association has been leading for the past few years.

"In the coming year, we're going to facilitate discussions beginning with the roundtable that will be crucial for the development of a document that accurately reflects what's happening in U.S. certification programs," said Laurie Sharp, Certification Council Director.

In 2009 and 2010, certification program members completed the Best Practices Surveys which asked for information on many

aspects of their programs. The surveys became the basis of the next step in the process. This project may serve to assist programs with criteria for performing external reviews of certification programs as required under the safe drinking water act.

Sharp adds this project wouldn't be possible without ABC's member support and hopes both member and non-member certifiers are able to contribute ideas. "We're asking for involvement and participation in a project that will ultimately benefit all certification programs."

*The roundtable will be held on Thurs., Jan. 27, 2011 at 3:00 PM. Registration materials are available online. For a complete technical program, see page 5.*

## New Verification System Available at No Cost to ABC Computer-Based Testing Clients

ABC's computer-based testing partner, Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP), provides many layers of security to ensure examination content is protected at all times during delivery to the candidate. Further improving examination security, the AMP Biometric Verification System is a feature now available to all ABC CBT clients at no additional fee.

A large part of examination security is ensuring the identity of the test taker. Proxy test taking or using a substitute test-taker is a significant issue for many credentialing organizations these days, but there are ways to guard against it.

The AMP Biometric Verification System captures and stores a digital image of the candidate's fingerprint at their testing station during the pre-examination process. This image can be used to verify a candidate's identity if there is ever a question as to who attempted an examination or a retake. The image is securely stored at AMP and is not made available to any other organization or law enforcement agency.

For all examination programs delivered in the AMP Assessment Center Network, AMP requires candidates to show photo identifi-

cation, sign a roster, and have their digital photograph taken. This photograph is displayed on screen throughout the candidate's testing session and on score reports issued at the testing center, allowing proctors and jurisdictions to easily verify candidate identity.

Candidates are also monitored by certified proctors and 360° audio/video surveillance equipment, which allows AMP staff to remotely monitor and record testing sessions in all directions at all times and zoom in on suspicious candidate activity as needed. While this is typically a sufficient level of security, it never hurts to add as many security procedures as possible to ensure the confidential nature of the testing process and defend against any legal action.

Each ABC jurisdiction may choose whether or not to request or require their candidates to conduct a fingerprint scan prior to testing. The AMP Biometric Verification System offers a no-cost program enhancement and further measure for protecting our water and wastewater systems.

*For more information on utilizing the AMP Biometric Verification System during your CBT exams or utilizing CBT for your exams, please contact ABC.*

### A Message from ABC's President-Elect

Jenny Chambers, Montana DEQ

Over the years, I have had the privilege to get to know many of you and witness firsthand the dedication of ABC's members, Board of Directors, volunteers and staff. That is one of the many reasons it is honor to be serving as your 2011 President.

With the New Year drawing closer and the holidays upon us, it's an important time to reflect on the events of the past year and look forward. For ABC, 2011 brings new and enhanced services for our members ranging from enhanced, legally-defensible, psychometrically sound standardized exams to the implementation of a Continuing Education Review Program. In addition, we'll review our accomplishments and focus on strategic planning efforts as we head into the future with a balanced budget and aligned initiatives.

This past year, many of our programs have faced hardships and financial struggles and in response found ways to maximize our resources and align them with careful planning on what the future may hold. ABC's focus has been no different and as a strong membership organization, our aim is to provide the best services and resources to assist you with your mission!

Please join in the celebration of 2011 and share with us the ABC story at the 24th Annual Conference January 26-28, 2011. This year's theme "Making a Difference" was chosen to celebrate what we all proudly accomplish each and every day.

Again, I am honored and privileged to serve as your President. A special thank you to John Solvie and other past leaders for their mentorship and guidance as I step into

*(President-Elect continued on page 6)*

## Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Serves as Official Welcome to Ankeny



(Above) Paul Bishop and Harris Seidel pictured during the ribbon cutting ceremony. (Above right) Bishop addresses staff and chamber members and explains the important work of ABC's members.



ANKENY, Iowa -- "We're pleased to have an organization such as yours be part of our community," Ankeny Mayor Steve D. Van Oort expressed during ABC's ribbon cutting ceremony.

The Oct. 8 celebration included staff, Ankeny chamber members and special guest Harris Seidel, ABC co-founder.

After sharing the mission of ABC and its members, both Seidel and Paul Bishop, CEO, marked the official opening of the new ABC office by cutting a ribbon stretched in the front of the office space. The moment symbolized a new chapter for the Association which until 2010 called the city of Ames home for almost 40 years. Following the ceremony, guests were invited to view the new office space.

(Testing Service Update continued from cover)

ABC's Need-to-Know (NTK) Criteria and exam blueprint serve as the foundation for the ABC standardized exams, and our staff partnership with Professional Testing's lead psychometricians raises the bar for ABC's exam development process and ensures ABC is offering our members the best possible product. (Learn more about Professional Testing on page 2).

### **Who developed the JTA surveys and how were they developed?**

The JTA surveys were developed by ABC's Validation & Examination (V&E) Committees in partnership with Professional Testing, Inc. The purpose of the revalidation is in first part to ensure that the new exam blueprint incorporates stakeholders input, and in second part, to create a documentation trail to show where the foundation for the examinations came from. To support the validity of the examinations, ABC must be able to clearly demonstrate the link between what operators are reporting in the JTA and the exam content. Revalidation is a typical process for mature certification programs.

### **When the JTAs are returned, how are the NTK and exam specifications (or exam blueprint) developed?**

The exam blueprint is developed based on the results of the JTA process. In the survey, job incumbents are asked how often they perform each task and how important the task is. The ratings are combined mathematically to calculate a "criticality index" which is typically based on multiplying the frequency and importance ratings.

Once the index is developed, weights will be recommended for each of the content areas on the exam, usually based on proportionally distributing the criticality. These weights are recommendations from the psychometricians, which will be presented to the V&E committees who will be asked to evaluate whether they are reasonable or whether adjustments are needed.

### **What is the process model that the V&E committees will be using in January for exam development?**

Following an exam development orientation, psychometricians will work with each V&E

committee to review draft forms selected from the existing item banks. As the committees review each exam form, they will be asked to verify the correct classification of the items – based on the new blueprint requirements. Combining high-level psychometric expertise with input from ABC's subject matter experts who represent the full breadth and scope of the industry is another critical factor in meeting ANSI requirements.

### **Why is this so important?**

These reviews and the creation of accredited certification programs and exams will enable our members and testing clients to have direct participation and continued confidence in the services and products offered by ABC. The psychometric enhancements being phased in to ABC's Testing Service and the development of member-driven industry best practices not only strengthen ABC, but more importantly the programs of our members.

Tuesday, January 25, 2011					
1:00 - 8:00	Conference Registration	4:15 - 4:45	Using a Training Matrix to Ensure Competent Operations	1:45 - 2:15	Newly Implemented Enforcement & Disciplinary Action Guidance and Practice
6:00 - 8:00	Conference Welcome Reception & Dinner Buffet	4:45 - 5:15	Water Training Institute: Industry Linkages & National Replication	2:15 - 2:45	The Enyart Decision - The Start of a New ADA Accommodation Standard for Certification Examinations?
<b>Wednesday, January 26, 2011</b>		<i>Session 4B: Breakout</i>		<i>Session 8: Breakout Session</i>	
<i>Session 1: Conference Introduction and Keynote Address</i>		3:15 - 5:15	Wastewater Breakout Session	2:45 - 3:00	Afternoon Networking Break
8:30 - 9:15	Conference Welcome, Arizona Welcome, Passing of the Gavel, President's Message, Conference Overview	5:30 - 7:30	Evening Networking Reception	<i>Session 5: Developing Operator Competency</i>	
9:15 - 9:45	Keynote - Water	<b>Thursday, January 27, 2011</b>		3:00 - 3:30	Regulatory Update
9:45 - 10:15	Keynote - Wastewater	<i>Session 5: Developing Operator Competency</i>		3:30 - 5:00	Operator Certification Program Administration Best Practices Roundtable
10:15 - 10:30	Morning Networking Break	8:30 - 9:00	Operators: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow	5:30 - 7:30	Evening Networking Reception
<i>Session 2: Managing Change</i>		9:00 - 9:30	Asset Management Training as Part of Overall Operator Training	<b>Friday, January 28, 2011</b>	
10:30 - 12:00	The Glass Ain't Half Empty, It's Just Too Big!	9:30 - 10:00	The Development of Online Learning Communities in Preparation for the Wastewater/Drinking Water State Licensure Test	<i>Session 9: A Growing Industry</i>	
12:00 - 1:30	Conference Luncheon and Awards Ceremony	10:00 - 10:15	Morning Networking Break	8:30 - 9:00	Implementation of Apprenticeship Programs for Water & Wastewater Operators
<i>Session 3: Making a Difference</i>		<i>Session 6: Certification Program Success Stories</i>		9:00 - 9:30	Looking into the Future - Competency Based Training for Operators & Managers Based on Effective Utility Management Principles
1:30 - 2:00	ABC: Measuring the Difference	10:15 - 10:45	Partnering for Success: Arizona Operator Certification Program & Gateway Community College	9:30 - 10:00	The Importance of Expanding Safety Training for Water/Wastewater Operators
2:00 - 2:30	ABC's Continuing Education Review Program	10:45 - 11:15	Maximizing Resources to Support Kentucky's Certification Program	10:00 - 10:15	Morning Networking Break
2:30 - 3:00	BC's Training Registry - A Win-Win-Win for All	11:15 - 12:15	ABC Annual Business & Stakeholder Meeting Discussing ABC Initiatives	<i>Session 10: Emerging Certifications</i>	
3:00 - 3:15	Afternoon Networking Break	12:15 - 1:15	Conference Luncheon	10:15 - 10:45	Certification & Training for Colorado Biosolids Land Appliers
<i>Session 4A: Training Innovations</i>		<i>Session 7: Legal Issues</i>		<i>Session 11: Conference Wrap-Up</i>	
3:15 - 3:45	Online Support for Small Water Systems	1:15 - 1:45	ABC Exam Development Presentation	10:45 - 11:15	Planning for your 2012 Conference; Highlighting Your 2011 Conference
3:45 - 4:15	Use of Clickers in Operator Certification Test Review & Training			<i>Program subject to change.</i>	



Special thanks to ABC's Annual Conference sponsors: Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP), CEU Plan and American Water Works Association.

(Exam Development continued from cover)

While there are several organizations involved in the accreditation of personnel certification programs/organizations, ANSI has several distinct attributes that set its independent accreditation review apart:

- ANSI, the International Organization for Standardization\* (www.iso.org) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (www.iec.ch) offer instant name recognition and prestige for certification programs
- ANSI accreditation is based on the International Standard ISO/IEC 17024, Conformity assessment - General requirements for bodies of operating certification of persons.
- As part of a global system of accreditation agencies that hold membership in the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), ANSI is actively engaged in the implementation of ISO/IEC 17024.

The ANSI accreditation process involves both a review of a paper application and the

performance of an assessment (onsite visit) to validate information provided by each applicant. The use of an onsite assessment for accreditation of personnel certification agencies is unique to ANSI. Assessment preparations are already underway with the recent release of the Job Task Analysis (JTA) surveys. Data collected from the JTAs will serve as the foundation of a new exam blueprint for ABC's next generation of standardized exams. Also critical to obtaining an ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation is continuing to build important industry partnerships.

"Our relationship with Professional Testing not only offers ABC access to professional psychometricians, but guidance from industry leaders who have prepared numerous certification programs similar to ours for an assessment by ANSI," says Jenny Chambers, 2010 President-Elect.

In the coming months, ABC staff will continue working closely with volunteer subject matter

experts and Professional Testing psychometricians to implement other phases of the Testing Service development plan. Once completed, ABC members will have yet another assurance of the quality of an ABC examination.

Chambers says obtaining the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 certification standard would represent one of the most defining moments in the organization's history. "ABC has always prided itself on being the industry leader when it comes to certification examinations. Striving to obtain an accreditation that has become known the 'hallmark of a quality certification program' is topping our list of initiatives that are focused on continuing to ensure we're offering the best possible testing service for our members."

**ABC's 24th Annual Conference will include a Stakeholder Meeting discussing ABC initiatives including the ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation on Thursday, January 27, 2011.**

**Annual Conference Early Bird Registration Deadline:**  
December 16, 2010

**ABC Office Closed: Christmas Eve Day** - December 24, 2010; **Christmas Day observance** - December 27, 2010

**ABC Office Closed: New Year's Eve** - December 31, 2010

**WT, WW, Coll, Dist V&E Committee Meetings** - January 24-25, 2011; Phoenix, AZ

**ABC 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference** - January 25-28, 2011; Phoenix, AZ

**Board of Directors Meeting** - January 29, 2011; Phoenix, AZ

**Strategic Planning Committee Meeting** - April 29-30, 2011; Ankeny, IA

**Leadership Council Meeting** - June 10, 2011; Washington, D.C.

**Board of Directors Meeting** - June 11, 2011; Washington, D.C.

For the most current information, visit [ABC's Online Calendar >>](#)

## ABC HIGHLIGHTS

### Beta Test Underway for ABC's Continuing Education Review Program

Developed by your peers, the Continuing Education Review Program allows trainers and educators to submit their courses for review against evaluation criteria developed in partnership with ABC's member network, continuing education developers and training evaluators. The project is in its final stages of development with a beta test underway. Members can expect the service to be live in early 2011, and will see a preview of the program at the Annual Conference. Trainers interested in submitting courses for review should contact [ContEd@abccert.org](mailto:ContEd@abccert.org).

### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration to be held in Tampa, Florida

Throughout its rich history, ABC's members have remained dedicated to their mission of protecting public health and the environment by advancing the quality and integrity of environmental certification programs. We will celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at ABC's 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Tampa, Florida January 17-20, 2012. Mark your calendars to attend this historic ABC event!

### EPA Tribal Certification Program Update

ABC will continue its work to administer the National Tribal Drinking Water Operator Certification Program for personnel operating drinking water systems in Indian Country under a contract awarded by the EPA this October. In order to be eligible for fiscal year 2011 EPA Drinking Water Infrastructure Grant Tribal Set-Aside funds, a Tribe must have or agree to obtain an operator certified under an EPA approved program. An operator certification through a State with an approved operator certification program will also meet this eligibility criteria for funding. To date, more than 350 operators have received applications to become certified through the National Tribal Drinking Water Operator Certification Program which also allows for initial grandparenting of eligible candidates.

### ABC Member Retirement

Steve Desmond has retired from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. ABC wishes Steve all the best on his retirement, and expresses gratitude for his many years of service to ABC and his contributions to the water and wastewater industry.

*(President continued from cover)*

span North America and abroad, merging their exceptional knowledge and skills to make ABC's standardized certification exams unparalleled in the field of environmental certification.

2010 represented the most expansive changes to ABC since its inception in 1972. A major governance and organizational restructuring was implemented, which ABC's membership overwhelmingly approved in 2008. It significantly reduced the size of the Board of Directors, freeing the board up to govern more efficiently and focus on strategic initiatives. It also established three advisory coun-

cils (Certification, Leadership, and Validation & Examination) to ensure that member needs are comprehensively addressed at every level.

ABC's primary focus this year was raising its psychometric bar to maintain stride with today's demanding standards. This resulted in establishing a symbiotic industry partnership with Professional Testing for psychometric oversight of ABC's exam development process. For our members, it means significantly enhancing the integrity and legal defensibility of ABC's standardized exams. The Board of Directors is also pursuing validation of its enhanced exam psychometrics through ANSI/ISO/IEC 17024 accreditation.

The year is coming to an end with a wide-ranging focus on member services, not the least of which is preparations to roll out a Continuing Education Review Program. The program will review training courses against a set of pre-established training criteria, which will be offered to our member programs at no charge.

Great things are in store for our members in 2011 and I look forward to passing the gavel to ABC's 2011 President Jenny Chambers. My very best to you and your families this holiday season!

*(President -Elect continued from page 3)*

this role at one of the most exciting times in ABC's history.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank you for your membership and extend our best wishes for a wonderful Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!