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Standard Guide for Requirements for Bodies That Operate Certification Programs in the Field of Search and Rescue¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide defines the organizational structure, policies, and procedures required to operate a certification program in the field of search and rescue.

1.2 Certifications are used by authorities having jurisdiction as a component to their credentialing process, typically to demonstrate one component of an individual's ability to field.

1.3 Certifications are typically provided by third party, disinterested providers and are commonly used to validate an individual's, team's, or authority having jurisdiction's training program in a particular area.

1.4 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.5 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 Referenced Document:

ANSI-ISO-IEC 17024 Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons²

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *candidate, n*—applicant who has fulfilled specified prerequisites, allowing his/her participation in the certification process. (ANSI-ISO-IEC 17024)

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² Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

3.1.2 *certification, n*—a statement of record that indicates that a candidate has successfully completed a certification process administered by a certification body and has demonstrated the relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities as defined by the standard in question.

3.1.3 *certification process, n*—all activities by which a certification body establishes that a person fulfils specified competence requirements, including application, evaluation, decision on certification, surveillance and recertification, use of certificates and logos/marks. (ANSI-ISO-IEC 17024)

3.1.4 *certification system, n*—set of procedures and resources for carrying out the certification process as per a certification scheme, leading to the issue of a certificate of competence including maintenance. (ANSI-ISO-IEC 17024)

3.1.5 *certifying body, n*—an organization responsible for developing a certification scheme and implementing a certification system to a set standard within the relevant field and granting a certification in the relevant field.

3.1.6 *credential, n*—the right granted by the authority having jurisdiction to an individual, crew, or team to operate and represent the authority having jurisdiction.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 A certification body issuing certifications in the field of search and rescue is required to meet the requirements identified in this guide.

4.2 This guide can be used by an authority having jurisdiction to determine whether to accept a certification from a certification body.

4.3 This guide can be used by an authority having jurisdiction to validate audit a certifying body.

4.4 This guide can be used by a certifying body to validate that its certification scheme, certification process, and certification system meet industry standards.

4.5 Any certification body operating in accordance to ANSI-ISO-IEC 17024 or equivalent shall be considered to be in compliance with this standard.

5. Organization

5.1 The certification body shall be formed as a legal entity in the country that it operates.

5.2 The certification body shall comply with the statutory requirements for the areas in which it operates.

5.3 The certification body shall have written policies and procedures that define its operations including but not limited to:

- 5.3.1 Structure.
- 5.3.2 Business operations.
- 5.3.3 Personnel.
- 5.3.4 Certification scheme, system, and process.
- 5.3.5 Candidate application.
- 5.3.6 Complaint procedures.
- 5.3.7 Document compliance.
- 5.3.8 Certification revocation procedures.
- 5.3.9 Privacy and security procedures.

5.4 The certification body shall confine its requirements, evaluation, and decision on certification to those matters specifically related to the scope of the desired certification.

5.5 The certification body shall be structured so as to give confidence to interested parties in its competence, impartiality, and integrity. In particular, the certification body:

5.5.1 Shall be independent and impartial in relation to its applicants, candidates, and certified persons, and shall take all possible steps to ensure ethical operations.

5.5.2 Shall be responsible for its decisions relating to the granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope, or suspending and withdrawing the certification.

5.5.3 Shall identify the management group(s) or person(s) which shall have overall responsibility for:

5.5.3.1 Evaluation, certification, and surveillance as defined in this international standard, the applicable competence standards and other relevant documents;

5.5.3.2 The formulation of policies relating to the operation of the certification body, with regard to certification of persons;

5.5.3.3 Decisions on certification;

5.5.3.4 The implementation of its policies and procedures; and

5.5.3.5 The delegation of authority to any committees or individuals to undertake defined activities on its behalf.

5.6 The certification body shall have a documented structure which safeguards impartiality, including provisions to ensure the impartiality of the operations of the certification body. This structure shall enable the participation of all parties significantly concerned in the development of policies and principles regarding the content and functioning of the certification system, without any particular interest predominating.

5.7 The certification body shall ensure that the activities of bodies related to it do not compromise the confidentiality and impartiality of its certification.

6. Certification

6.1 The certification body shall define policies and procedures for granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope of the desired certification, and suspending or withdrawing the certification.

6.2 The certification body shall not offer or provide training, or aid others in the preparation of such services, unless it

demonstrates how training is independent of the evaluation and certification of persons to ensure that confidentiality and impartiality are not compromised.

6.3 The certification body shall define policies and procedures (for example, code of conduct) for the resolution of appeals and complaints received from applicants, candidates, certified persons and their employers, and other parties about the certification process and criteria, as well as policies and procedures for the performance of certified persons. These policies and procedures shall ensure that appeals and complaints are resolved independently, in an unbiased manner.

7. Certification Scheme

7.1 The certification body shall define the methods and mechanisms to be used to evaluate the competence of candidates, and shall establish appropriate policies and procedures for the initial development and continued maintenance of these methods and mechanisms.

7.2 The certification body shall define a process for the development and maintenance of certification schemes that includes the review and validation of the scheme by the scheme committee.

7.3 The certification body shall identify which standard or standards to which the certification applies.

7.4 Successful completion of an approved training course may be a requirement of a certification scheme, but recognition/approval of training courses by the certification body shall not compromise impartiality, or reduce the demands of the evaluation and certification requirements.

7.5 The certification body shall evaluate the methods for examination of candidates. Examinations shall be fair, valid, and reliable. Appropriate methodology and procedures (such as collecting and maintaining statistical data) shall be defined to reaffirm, at least annually, the fairness, validity, reliability, and general performance of each examination and all identified deficiencies corrected.

8. Records

8.1 The certification body shall maintain a record system appropriate to its particular circumstances and to comply with regulations, including a means to confirm the status of a certified person.

8.2 The records shall demonstrate that the certification process has been effectively fulfilled, particularly with respect to application forms, evaluation reports, surveillance activities, and other documents relating to granting, maintaining, renewing, expanding and reducing the scope, and suspending or withdrawing certification.

8.3 The records shall be identified, managed, and disposed of in such a way as to ensure the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of the information.

8.4 The records shall be kept for an appropriate period of time to demonstrate continued confidence for at least one full certification cycle, or as required by recognition arrangements, contractual, legal, or other obligations.

9. Personnel

9.1 The certification process shall define the competence requirements for volunteer, employed, or contracted persons involved in the certification process.

9.2 The certification body shall require its volunteer, employed, or contracted persons to sign a document by which they commit themselves to comply with the rules defined by the certification body, including those relating to confidentiality and those relating to independence from commercial and other interests, and from any prior and/or present link with the persons to be examined that would compromise impartiality.

9.3 Clearly documented instructions shall be available to the volunteer, employed, or contracted persons describing their duties and responsibilities.

9.3.1 These instructions shall be kept up to date.

9.3.2 All personnel involved in any aspect of certification activities shall possess appropriate education, experience, and technical expertise.

10. Requirements for Evaluators/Examiners

10.1 Evaluators/examiners shall meet the requirements of the certification body based upon applicable competence standards and other relevant documents.

10.2 The certification body shall ensure that the evaluators/examiners are:

10.2.1 Familiar with the certification scheme, system, and process;

10.2.2 Have a thorough understanding of the relevant examination process and documents;

10.2.3 Have appropriate confidence in the field being tested; and

10.2.4 Are free from any interest to ensure impartial and non-discriminatory judgments and assessments.

10.3 If an examiner has a potential conflict of interest in the examination of a candidate, the certification body shall undertake measures to ensure that confidentiality and impartiality of the examination is not compromised (see 6.2). These measures shall be recorded.

11. Certification Process

11.1 The certification body shall on request provide the candidate with a document that defines the certification process. This document shall provide the requirements for certification, the applicants' rights, and the duties of a certified person which includes a code of conduct, if applicable.

11.2 The certification body shall require the completion of an application, signed by the applicant seeking certification, which includes:

11.2.1 The desired certification;

11.2.2 A statement that the person agrees to comply with the requirements for certification and to supply any information needed for the evaluation;

11.2.3 Details of relevant qualifications, confirmed and supported by evidence; and

11.2.4 General information on the applicant, for example name, address, and other information required to identify the person.

12. Evaluation

12.1 The certification body shall examine competence, based on the requirements of the scheme, by written, oral, practical, observational, or other means.

12.2 Examinations shall be planned and structured in a manner which ensures that all scheme requirements are objectively and systematically verified, with sufficient documented evidence produced to confirm the competence of the candidate.

12.3 The certification body shall adopt reporting procedures that ensure the performance and results of the evaluation are documented in an appropriate and comprehensible manner, including the performance and results of examinations.

13. Decision on Certification

13.1 The decision on certification of a candidate shall be made solely by the certification body on the basis of the information gathered during the certification process.

13.1.1 When possible those who make the certification decision shall not have participated in the examination or training of the candidate.

13.2 The certification body shall provide a certificate to all certified persons. The certification body shall maintain sole ownership of the certificates. The certificate may take the form of a letter, card, or other medium, signed or authorized by a responsible officer of the certification body.

13.3 Certificates shall contain, as a minimum, the following information:

13.3.1 The name of the certified person and a unique identifier;

13.3.2 The name of the certification body;

13.3.3 A reference to the competence standard or other relevant documents, including issue, on which the certification is based; and

13.3.4 The scope of the certification, including validity conditions and limitations effective date of certification and date of expiry.

14. Recertification

14.1 The certification body shall define recertification requirements according to the competence standard and other relevant documents, to ensure that the certified person continues to comply with the current certification requirements.

14.2 The certification body shall have procedures and conditions for the maintenance of certification in accordance with the certification scheme. The conditions shall be adequate to ensure that there is impartial evaluation to confirm the continuing competence of the certified person.

15. Use of Certificates, Logos, and Marks

15.1 A certification body that provides a certification mark or logo shall document the conditions for use and shall appropriately manage the rights for usage and representation.

15.2 The certification body shall require that a certified person sign an agreement:

15.2.1 To comply with the relevant provisions of the certification;