2024 Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification Program Details, Criteria for Admission, Scope, and Program Schedule

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**Offered by Virginia Tech Continuing and Professional Education**

**in Blacksburg and Arlington, VA**

**in cooperation with**

**Society of Product Safety Professionals**

**and**

**ADK Information Services, LLC**

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8. **Introduction & Background**

The Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification Program is the outgrowth of decisions made in 2016 & 2017 by a group of professionals who wanted to expand education opportunities in the product safety field, as well as to develop a path for professional growth and leadership. This led to the creation of two new organizations that paved the way for achieving these purposes: The Society of Product Safety Professionals (SPSP) and Consumer Product Safety Certification Services (CPSCS).

The CPSCS is an independent affiliate of SPSP which oversees the programs policies and procedures and certifies that the candidates are qualified to be issued the designation Certified Product Safety Professional™.

SPSP initiated development of the program by forming a task force comprised of product safety professionals, including individuals working for consumer product companies, along with professionals who provide outside consulting expertise to such companies. The task force worked throughout 2017 to identify areas of knowledge required of well-­‐‑rounded consumer product safety professionals. They synthesized them into five key areas of knowledge that serve as the foundation for the Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification program.

The leaders of SPSP and CPSCS determined that they would develop their program in collaboration with ADK Information Services, LLC, which had a 12-year history of developing product safety education management courses at the university level, including the development of certification programs. The first four classes of the certification program were offered through the Saint Louis University Chaifetz School of Business.

In 2022, the Blacksburg, Virginia-based Virginia Tech (VT) and the leadership of SPSP and CPSCS, formally agreed to establish the Professional Certification Program at the Virginia Tech Research Center located on the Arlington, Virginia campus in the Washington, D.C. area. The program will be co-managed within Virginia Tech Continuing and Professional Education, and Pamplin College of Business.

As the university partner of SPSP and ADK Information Services, Virginia Tech will be represented in various committees that have been set up to administer the program. These committees include Admissions Committee, Essay Review Committee, Case Study Review Committee, and in other appropriate roles including selection of university program instructors who will be invited to present to candidates in the program.

The five knowledge areas that were defined by the SPSP special task force as essential for effective management of a company’s product safety and compliance programs are as follows:

1. Culture and its relationship to product safety in a consumer product company, related

government agencies, and related outside service providers

2. Product Safety Assurance, including areas of risk assessment, risk tolerance, and

technical issues associated with the design, manufacture, and distribution of consumer products

3. Regulatory Compliance, primarily, but not exclusively, within the U.S. marketplace

4. Incident Management and the development of consumer database reports and information

about incidents involving injuries and/or deaths associated with products offered by a company

5. Product Recall and Withdrawal, including notification, reporting related corrective actions, and management

As a result of the task force’s work, the program focuses on the elements of a product safety culture within companies, both large and small, and delves into topics essential to managing a product safety-­‐‑oriented organization, some of which include:

* Knowledge of a broad range of consumer product safety issues
* Creating a risk assessment system reflective of the company’s commitment to customer safety
* Establishing priorities for appropriate action and approval by senior leadership
* Designing a product safety program that addresses corrective actions and withdrawal of products where appropriate

Upon successful completion of the academic program, Virginia Tech will issue a Certificate of Completion.

In addition to completion of the academic program, the certification program also requires that candidates successfully complete an assessment workshop which includes passing 1) a multiple-choice examination, 2) an individual essay, 3) a written case study, and 4) an oral presentation of their case study. Upon successful completion of the assessment workshop, the CPSCS, as the independent affiliate of SPSP that oversees the assessment program’s policies and procedures, certifies that the candidates are qualified to be issued the designation Certified Product Safety Professional™. At this point candidates are awarded their designation pins by SPSP. This recognition elevates the stature of the professional accomplishments of the individual.

1. **Certification Program Objectives**

This program is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

* 1. Offer a rigorous, but fair program that expands the candidate’s knowledge and provides information about the key components of a product safety system.
  2. Provide product safety professionals with the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the design and management of a product safety system. This certification program assesses candidates’ knowledge and understanding through a multiple-­‐‑choice examination, an essay component, and a case study project.
  3. Recognize the accomplishments of product safety professionals based on academic competency and prior experience in fulfilling the responsibilities associated with designing and managing product safety systems.

Through classroom activities and webinars on specific knowledge areas of product safety management, this program provides a meaningful education experience that will be recognized by peers, employers, and the product safety community as validating *the designation as a Certified Product Safety Professional™.*

**III. Eligibility Requirements**

The Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification program is open to professionals in five different categories, as listed below, with all candidates required to meet the following criteria:

A. Possess at least 10 years of product safety work experience or 7 years of experience accompanied by a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university.

* Hold a position considered professional in nature. This includes the recognition by their peers and supervisors that the individual is managing responsibilities related to product safety at a meaningful level.
* Devote a minimum of 50% of a part-­‐‑ or full-­‐‑ time job to product safety-related responsibilities that are associated with the design and management of the various components of a product safety system. This is determined by evaluating the candidate’s degree of authority and their employer’s reliance on their ability to defend analytical approaches used in professional practice. This also encompasses their recommending how to control hazards through engineering and/or administrative approaches.
* Have breadth of professional safety duties. This is determined by evaluating the variety of hazards or events about which the candidate must advise, and the range of skills involved in recognizing, evaluating, and controlling hazards. Examples of skill areas include analysis, synthesis, design, investigation, manufacturing, planning, administration, and communication.

B**.** Consumer Product Safety Professional in Industry

Individuals employed by companies that develop, manufacture, and market consumer products, or who are responsible for importing consumer products into the United States are eligible for consideration. In this capacity the position’s primary responsibility must be the prevention of product-­‐‑related harm to people and related property. Such individuals must have at least 10 years of experience as a product safety professional within a consumer product company or 7 years of such experience, accompanied by a related bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. Such experience may involve the blending of employment periods between consumer product companies or advising such companies within the professional’s field of competencies.

C. Consultants and Service Providers

This category includes individuals with special areas of expertise who are called upon as consultants or service providers to assist manufacturers, retailers, or importers in the implementation of their product safety programs. This would include, but not be limited to engineers, attorneys, laboratory experts, technical specialists including chemistry, toxicology, medical, and human factors, and business process specialists in such areas as product recalls or supply chain management. Such individuals must meet the background requirement to enter the certification program, namely at least 10 years of experience as a product safety consultant to consumer product companies, or 7 years of such experience accompanied by a related bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. Such experience may involve the blending of employment periods between consumer product companies or advising such companies within the professional’s field of competencies.

D. Government Employees

State or federal employees, whose job function is specifically focused on consumer product safety may also apply. Such individuals must be employed in this capacity at least half time, and have specific knowledge associated with the management of one or more of the components of a product safety system that is appropriate to the position they hold. Such individuals must have at least 10 years of experience as a state or federal employee or 10 years of experience in a state or federal position combined with experience as a product safety professional in a company. Individuals would also be eligible with 7 years of such combined state or federal experience and experience as a product safety professional within a company accompanied by a related bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. Such experience may involve the blending of employment periods between government service and consumer product companies or advising such companies within the professional’s field of competencies.

E. Non-­‐‑Profit Organization Employees and Volunteers

Also eligible are employees or volunteers of Non-Governmental Organizations (or similar organizations) whose job focus is at least 50% on consumer product safety and have specific knowledge associated with the management of one or more of the five key knowledge areas of a product safety system.

**IV. Scope of Program**

The certification program’s methodology is based on Five Areas of Knowledge. The program content and focus are on the following five areas of knowledge:

1. Corporate Culture of Product Safety
   * Corporate Product Safety Policy: policy development, communication to all stakeholders and advocates for support of senior management.
   * Advice to leadership: safety-­‐‑related fact-­‐‑based assessments, advocacy and recommendation of actions and plans for corrective actions regarding product designs, production alterations, including products in the field; communicates to the organization the need to reduce or eliminate foreseeable safety risks; drives safety risk issues to the corporate risk leadership and corporate officers; works with appropriate company officials and legal counsel to determine whether to report incidents to a regulator when warranted under applicable statutes and/or internal safety policies.
   * Ethical conduct: Participates in and advocates for developing a product safety mission for the company, including provisions for conduct and ethical behavior; elevation of consumer safety to a heightened prominence in corporate decision making; quality of training of product safety personnel, and promotes building respect within and outside of the company for its commitment to product safety
2. Consumer Product Safety Assurance

Successful candidates will have a general understanding of basic elements of a broad consumer product safety assurance system. They will master these elements to the extent necessary to act and/or engage appropriate external and internal resources for action.

* + Product hazard assessment: including assessment of product information, market data, relevant published literature, incident claims, litigation, on-­‐‑line product reviews, and other sources of field data for potential risks of hazards; promotes policies and procedures ensuring that product safety is considered in all relevant corporate processes such as product design (including foreseeable consumer behavior), manufacturing, customer service, customer support, marketing, field service, etc. as it relates to product hazards; assessment of processes, test methods, and standards to validate final product risk; assessment of marketing materials and product instructions for safe use of products.
  + Anticipation, identification, and evaluation of potential risks in new products, including participation in design and development processes, continuous improvement through evaluation of existing designs with product design team; ensure that product designs integrate consumer use behavior—including foreseeable misuse—into final product decisions; collaboration with product managers, development teams, customers, retailers, dealers, distributors, and service companies on product safety issues; integration of safety analytical tools such as Design Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (DFMEA) and Process Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (PFMEA), criticality analysis, fault trees; risk sensing analytics and others into the product development process to predict and reasonably minimize safety risks to consumers and others.
  + Third-party certifier management: including coordination of testing to validate product compliance with mandatory and voluntary standards; management and maintenance of Good Laboratory Practices of qualified laboratories for self-­‐‑certifications where appropriate.

1. Regulatory Compliance

Successful candidates will have a general understanding of the basic elements in a product safety and regulatory compliance system. They will master these elements to the extent necessary to act and/or engage appropriate external and internal resources for action.

* + Encompasses a knowledge of rules, regulations, standards, bans, and restrictions applicable to a company’s products; use of information sources to stay up-­‐‑to-­‐‑date on standards and regulations with continuous efforts to research and learn about new information related to their organization’s industry; communicates a company’s overall safety vision and requirements internally and across the supply chain.
  + Cognizant of regulations and requirements in all applicable markets while noting that the overall program’s focus is primarily on the United States market at the federal, state, and local levels; leverages industry associations to keep abreast of changing laws, regulations and standards and comments on them when appropriate; maintains awareness of standards development panels, committees, industry groups, task forces, etc.; participates in standards development activities.

1. Incident Management, Data Management, and Human Factors

Successful candidates will have a general understanding of basic elements in an incident management program. They will master these elements to the extent necessary to act and/or engage appropriate external and internal resources for action.

* + Ensures a comprehensive corporate system through which all product safety-­‐‑related complaints, incidents, injuries, lawsuits, liability claims, warranty claims, etc. are compiled in a data management system.
    - Manages and maintains a system to investigate, evaluate, and, when appropriate, act on safety-­‐‑related incidents, including a system that escalates potential or actual product safety events for reporting, recalling, and other corrective actions such as product re-designs and production changes.

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* + - Monitors field complaints received by phone, email, mail, warranty cards and other claims, legal actions, on-­‐‑line and social media complaints that may indicate safety- related product issues, including a working knowledge of consumer safety information sources such as the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s (CPSC) SaferProducts.gov website, CPSC’s NEISS (National Electronic Injury Surveillance System), and relevant information from regulatory agencies; reviews for relevance product recalls of products similar to those manufactured/sold by the company.
    - Manages resources to forensically determine root causes of failures; evaluates the effectiveness of corrective actions and maintains all records necessary for product safety actions and for corrective actions both internally and externally. Has knowledge of human factors, and ways in which consumers may interact with various consumer products.

1. Product Recall Actions and Withdrawal Systems

Successful candidates will have a general understanding of basic elements in a product corrective action and withdrawal system. They will master these elements to the extent necessary to act and/or engage appropriate external and internal resources for action.

* + Corrective actions and withdrawal of products, including communication and coordination of product sales and shipping-­‐‑holds; reverse logistics; recalls and other corrective actions including safety notices, corrective action preparation and coordination with the appropriate regulatory agency and company personnel.
  + Consumer communications and remunerations, including notification of a product hazard, defect, or failure; the system for separating the consumer from the hazard, repair, replacement, or repurchase as well as disposal plans, modification of future production to eliminate the identified risk that led to recall or corrective action.
  + Designs, develops, and maintains systems to control affected inventory and compensation/incentives to encourage the appropriate corrective action and withdrawal participation.
  + Monitors and reports corrective actions activity as required by law; manages corrective actions; maintain all records for product destruction, returned inventories, repaired or refurbished products, etc.
  + Communicates lessons learned and conducts post-­‐‑mortems on all product safety corrective actions and withdrawals with a broad team from across the company, as well as external suppliers.

**V. Certification Program Schedule**

The program is segmented into three parts: 1) a two-­‐‑day opening workshop which brings the educational cohort together in-­‐‑person or in a virtual setting of video conference classrooms depending on factors including health and safety conditions; 2) a webinar series that extends for 10- weeks where students convene remotely; and 3) a closing workshop where students and instructors reconvene on-­‐‑site or in a virtual classroom setting to participate in a multi-faceted examination process.

Opening Workshop

*August 29 & 30, 2024*

*VT Research Center, Arlington, VA*

The 2- ­‐‑day workshop will lay the foundation for designing and managing a proactive product safety system that places the safety of the consumer at a high level of an organization’s values structure. The workshop will focus on:

1) The culture of the company and on the development of a safety-­‐‑oriented company policy, advocacy for product safety,

2) Managing communication to all stakeholders, and description of how the organization will ensure safer products through user-­‐‑behavior-­‐‑focused designs, and information that will increase the consumer’s understanding of safety.

3) Product development, production, and adherence to high level safety goals throughout the supply chain. The candidates will examine elements of the product life cycle including critical stages of new product development, risk assessment hazard analysis and consumer -­‐‑related elements that include knowledge of consumer expectations and predictable consumer behavior

4) Regulatory compliance and conformity to standards, production, including testing and certification. Candidates are not expected to be experts in legislation development, but are expected to be familiar with the process of creating legislation at the regional, federal, and international level, and its relationship to regulatory bodies that oversee product safety, eventually reaching consumers

5)Consumer-­‐‑related elements include knowledge of consumer expectations and predictable consumer behavior, as well as the design and management of an ongoing corrective-action system, including product recalls and corrective design changes.

Webinar Series

*September 3 – October 4, 2024 Webinar Series (60 minutes per webinar)*

Weekly/bi-­‐‑weekly webinars will focus on specific product safety topics that align to the five areas of knowledge that are the core content of the program.

*1. Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment* (four 1-­‐‑hour segments)

Includes general knowledge relating to assessment of product information, market data, claims, and other sources; human interaction with a product, including foreseeable use and predictable misuse behaviors; assessment of test methods and standards to validate risk; integrate safety analysis tools such as Design Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (DFMEA) and Process Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (PFMEA), fault tree; third-party certifier management; validation of product compliance with mandatory and voluntary standards; and appropriate certification of lab and lab practices

*2. Product Compliance-­‐‑-­‐‑laws, regulations, and standards* (four 1-­‐‑hour segments): Includes general knowledge relating to developing a system for tracking new or expanded governmental requirements, ensuring communication throughout the company’s compliance chain; a planned system for using industry associations, standards information, and conferences as a tool for staying current with changing rules, and advocating company positions; maintain awareness of standards development panels, committees, and other venues for promoting awareness and understanding. This includes one module on international consumer product regulatory management.

*3. Incident Management, Data Management, and Human Factors*

(three 1-hour segments):

Includes general knowledge relating to a company’s system through which all product safety-­‐‑related complaints, incidents, injuries, lawsuits, liability claims and warranty claims are compiled in a central data system; manages and maintain a system to investigate, evaluate, and if appropriate, act on safety- related incidents and human factors that may affect the individual’s safety while using a consumer product; manage a system that escalates potential or actual product safety incidents for reporting, recall, or other actions.

*4. Product Corrective actions, and withdrawal systems* (two 1-­‐‑hour segments); Includes general knowledge relating to the design, development, and maintenance of a system to control affected inventory reverse logistics; includes plans for consumer or distributor compensation/incentives to encourage recall response; monitors and reports corrective actions as required by law; manage effectiveness and fraud-­‐‑free corrective actions; maintenance of all records for product destruction, returned inventories, repaired or refurbished products; evaluation of product safety corrective actions and communicates the selected corrective actions throughout the company supply chain and senior management.

Closing Workshop

*October 29 & 30, 2024*

*Main Campus, Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA*

Participants finish the program by sitting for the certification examination, which is comprised of both a multiple-­‐‑choice exam, and an individual essay addressing their understanding of the role of the Five Pillars of Knowledge. Candidates are required to pass the exam, as it demonstrates their knowledge of specific details associated with each of the knowledge areas. All the questions included in this examination are addressed by the course through in-­‐‑person and online course activities. In addition, candidates are called upon to demonstrate three skills that are essential in effective management: analytical ability, good judgement, and the ability to communicate effectively, which are identified through the essay component of the certification examination.

Finally, during the closing workshop, participants also present their Capstone Project. This consists of a case study they design and develop that reflects a candidate’s understanding of the different elements in a product safety system by describing the solution to a hazardous situation or a proactive opportunity in the product safety area. The case study will be presented to a panel of experts who will meet individually with each candidate during the closing 2-­‐‑day workshop in a virtual setting for each panel.

Upon completion of scoring each candidate’s various elements of the closing workshop, the Consumer Product Safety Certification Board will confirm those who have passed all elements of the assessment requirements and will thereby be declared as completing the requirements of the program. Their names will be formally presented to the Society of Product Safety Professionals, which awards the formal designation of *Certified Product Safety Professional™.*

Retake Provisions

For those candidates who did not pass any of the individual sections of the multiple-choice examination, the individual essay, or the case study requirements, a retake provision is offered to all eligible candidates for a small fee. Because the certification requirements call for passing each segment not passed, participants are encouraged to study each section as presented by the instructor. This means that the original exam questions will be repeated in the retake exam. Upon completion of scoring each candidate’s submission of the various elements of the assessment topics requiring attention, the Consumer Product Safety Certification Board will repeat the assessment requirements and declare those who have successfully completed all of the requirements of the program. Their names will be formally presented to the Society of Product Safety Professionals which awards the formal designation of Certified Product Safety Professional™. Any repeat-exam sections that are not passed ends the candidate’s unsuccessful path to certification.

**VI. Program Certification Credentials**

Upon successful completion of the certification examination and capstone project, the Society of Product Safety Professionals (SPSP) will award candidates the *Certified Product Safety Professional™* designation pin and a Certificate attesting to their successful completion of the Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification Program. Successful candidates will be officially allowed to use the letters “CPSP” following their full name for as long as the certification remains valid. They will be listed on the SPSP website as a “certified professional” in good standing having successfully completed the certification program (including any required examinations) offered by SPSP in collaboration with CPSCS.

Those candidates who successfully complete the course and pass the examination will receive a Certificate from SPSP with this or similar wording: "*This candidate has met the required experience criteria and successfully completed the Virginia Tech-SPSP Consumer Product Safety Professional Certification Program, demonstrating an understanding of the knowledge required to contribute to the design and management of a proactive and compliant product safety system within a company."*

1. If a candidate completes the required course work but does not sit for or does not pass all three components of closing workshop, he or she is entitled to receive a “certificate of completion” designating that he or she has completed the course work, but is not entitled to use the wording noted in the above paragraph and is not entitled to use the designation of “Certified Product Safety Professional (CPSP)” in any manner.
2. Re-Certification Maintenance will be required every five years and will be based in part on tutorial requirements developed through SPSP and CPSCS, along with associations and organizations that provide members with product safety-­‐‑related programs, and other forms of support of professionals in the field of consumer product safety. A description of the Certification Maintenance Program and associated fees is available at [www.productsafetyprofessionals.org.](http://www.productsafetyprofessionals.org/)

**VII. Program Registration**

**Program Tuition**

The tuition for the course and the examination is $5,600. For candidates of the 2024 class, there will be a $200 discount for those holding a current paid membership in the Society of Product Safety Professionals. This will bring the net tuition for members of this class to $5,400. Those who enter the program under the Early Admissions Registration deadline (April 15, 2024) will earn a separate $500 discount. These discounts cannot be applied to future classes until such time as so specified. In addition, there is a separate $195 admissions application fee to cover expenses associated with verification of employment background and education transcripts where appropriate.

**Registration Period:**

Program registration for the 2024 course will be open from January 15, 2024, until the closing date is announced. Applicants will be informed of their status as soon as the Admissions Committee has all required information and approved their acceptance into the program. Candidates may be asked to clarify certain information on their application form, as determined by the Admission Committee.

**Education Requirement**

Applicants who are applying under the applicable educational program option must have copies of their transcripts sent directly from the educational institution to the Society of Product Safety Professionals, Attn: SPSP Certification Program 4571 Laclede Ave. #326 St. Louis, MO 63108. International transcripts may be evaluated by the program Admissions Committee or a designated Third-party validator for acceptability. The program Admissions Committee will review the education documents submitted on behalf of an applicant and make a final decision based on strict compliance with the education requirement.

**Eligibility Appeal**

Candidates who are declined admittance to the program by the Admissions Committee may appeal that determination by a formal written request of the Consumer Product Safety Certification Services, which will have the final determination. Denial of admittance to a candidate does not preclude reconsideration of their application once identified deficiencies are satisfactorily addressed. Denial for a specific program year may be made based on available space in the program or other considerations unrelated to the candidate’s qualifications, but such determinations does not preclude acceptance in subsequent program years.

**Application Instructions**

Individuals seeking admittance to the program must fill out an application following the instructions provided. A complete application requires candidates to provide:

-­‐‑ Contact information

-­‐‑ History of employment, including specified information

-­‐‑ A qualifying education credential where appropriate

-­‐‑ Two letters of reference: One reference from a direct supervisor of the candidate working for a manufacturer, retailer, importer, distributor, or other relevant organization and who has worked with the candidate within the past 5 years or such period as determined by the Admissions Committee; and one reference from a colleague qualified to discuss the candidate’s character, professionalism, and commitment to product safety.

-­‐‑ Application agreement and validation, acknowledging truthful information has been provided

-­‐‑ Payment of Application fee ($195)

-­‐‑ Signed copy of application

-­‐‑ Release form allowing access to transcripts and relieving ADK Information Services, Society of Product Safety Professionals, Consumer Product Safety Certification Services, and their officers, directors, and employees of liability for non-­‐‑admittance or any consequential damages.

Do not send resumes, professional papers, continuing education course certificates, or any other items that are not specifically requested. After you submit your application, SPSP, CPSCS, or ADK or its agents may contact you with additional questions.

The application fee is nonrefundable and nontransferable. The fee covers the administrative expense of processing your application, including employment verification by an independent Third-party verifier. Payment of the application fee is required in order to formally initiate the application process. If all application requirements have not been met within one year of the application submission date, the application will expire and the application fee forfeited.

For further information, contact Society of Product Safety Professionals, Attn: Certification Program Coordinator, 4571 Laclede Ave. #326 St. Louis, MO 63108, or [info@productsafetyprofessionals.org](mailto:info@productsafetyprofessionals.org). Or by phone: 314-497-1797.

App*roved by the SPSP Board of Directors and CPSCS Boards of Governors as of December 30, 2023*

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