



PERPETUATING THE PROFESSIONALISM OF OUR INDUSTRY

AN INTERVIEW WITH LARRY INGRAM, CHFM, CHSP, CHC, CHESP

Larry Ingram has served in the environmental services industry since 1974 and eventually moved into the health care sector in 1987. Having been through 10 Joint Commission Surveys, he knows compliance and believes that environmental services is one of the most important departments in a health care facility. Ingram is the husband to Diana, and they have seven children, 12 grandchildren, and he's soon to be a great-grandfather for the very first time.

Q How long have you been a member of AHE, and when did you become CHESP-certified?

AHE and I go back to 2001—long before the name change. I've been CHESP certified since 2008 when I took advantage of a vendor scholarship. It was a great opportunity, and I was privileged to be able to use the scholarship.

Q What prompted or interested you in pursuing certification?

Having been “certified” in other AHA programs, I was aware of the CHESP but my job duties were focused more in other directions. As is the case in health care, there was a refocus in environmental services in our organization, and I felt that this certification would help me to better lead this vital service.

Q How did you prepare for certification? What was the hardest aspect in preparing to take the exam?

I ordered the study guide from AHE and also looked at the suggested materials in the guide. Because my job focus had been in other areas, I had to adjust my attention to the current issues and refresh my mind to the technical aspects. This made taking the exam somewhat tense.

Q What was your experience like in taking the exam?

I have taken similar pencil/paper exams at conferences, but I was going to take this one at a computer testing center. I was a little apprehensive about that, but once I was seated and started the exam my nervousness settled down. I do remember sitting in the car outside the testing center going over my notes and the exam guide.

Q How did you feel after passing the exam and learning about your newly acquired certification?

Truthfully, my first reaction was relief. Having been in the industry for decades I wasn't as sure of myself. Acquiring the CHESP gave me back confidence I had somehow lost over the years.

Q How has CHESP certification positively affected you and your role in your organization?

With renewed confidence I have been able to lead the environmental services department into many areas of improvement through quality and changed procedures. I became more interested in AHE

and the education opportunities offered and began working on AHE committees.

Q How has CHESP certification affected your career and long-term career goals and path?

Although I am heading toward the retirement years, this certification encouraged me to push others in the direction of certification. Those of us who are CHESP-certified should help perpetuate the professionalism of our industry and work with those starting their careers to become certified.

Q What would you tell others who are considering pursuing certification? How should they best prepare?

Do it. The confidence and knowledge gained is well worth the effort. It will help you in your current situation and in your future career path.

There is nothing better to prepare you than experience. Don't go through the motions but take every opportunity to learn while on the job. Dig down into the technical aspects of the process of stripping and coating in floors. Understand how the chemicals react and interact with each other. Take the online seminars offered by AHE, go to the conferences, attend local chapter meetings.

Q What do you see in the future regarding certification for environmental services leaders?

Everyone knows that our world is filled with information. If you don't stay on top of your situation, someone else will take your place. The more you know, the better you're situated to stay “on top of your game.” Becoming CHESP certified will help environmental services leaders lead their teams into the future.

Q What's the very best thing about being a certified CHESP?

For me it was a great personal encouragement becoming certified. Of course, this overflows into your personal life as well. Displaying my certificate in my office has led others to ask me about CHESP and it allows me to open the door to discussion about AHE. I am proud to be a member of AHE and be CHESP-certified. I would encourage everyone who is eligible to consider making this part of their life. ●