



PSA News

The Association for Service Professionals

Certification is the Way of the Future

By Hans Hansen, Jr. M/Cap, Csm

Consumers today are very wary of hiring someone to do a job unless they can see that the person has the expertise to accomplish the task at hand. This is why public accountants have taken additional courses and attend many seminars to keep their skills up to date; to become and maintain their credentials as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). Today, most people would readily acknowledge that a CPA is the best in the industry to address your accounting needs. This trend now extends to hundreds of skill protocols from engineers, plumbers, auto mechanics, carpenters, electricians and in our case, major appliance repair.



In 1995, the Professional Service Association (PSA), saw the need to establish skill standards for our industry since none existed at that time. A committee was formed and a set of competencies was developed indicating what categories and items needed to be included in the appliance technician skill set in order for that person to perform at a satisfactory level in accomplishing their mission as an industry approved major appliance service technician. This task was accomplished with the help of manufacturer service people, vocational instructors, employers and independent service technicians who also saw this as a way to prove that their own skills were at their peak level in order to deliver world class service to consumers.

The next step was to establish benchmarks to determine the different levels of expertise that would be acceptable to employers for different types of technicians. The first level is the technician just exiting from a vocational school with classroom knowledge but lacking field experience. This would be the entry level technician. The next level would be that of a field technician with specific knowledge and skills in certain areas of major appliance repair such as laundry equipment, cooking equipment, cooling equipment, etc. The final level would be the highest level of technician who would be qualified in all areas of major appliance repair and maintains his knowledge with continuing education and periodic re-certification.

With a set of skill standards now in hand, PSA developed a skill exam based on the industry competencies and introduced the Certified Appliance Professional (CAP) Program. The exam covers eight modules including Consumer Relations, Core Knowledge (Basic Skills), Cleaning Equipment (Laundry and Dishwashing), Convenience Equipment (Water heaters, disposers, compactors, etc.), Cooling Equipment, Gas Cooking, Electric, Cooking and Microwave Cooking. This exam is not brand specific, meaning that what we are testing your basic skills in each and every module listed.

This exam has over 300 questions and tests your skills in the above areas. You need a passing grade of 75 on each module to pass and become a certified appliance technician. Once certification is achieved, it is valid for 4 years and then you must renew your certification in order to insure that you are keeping your skills up to date with new advances within the industry. Currently, the exam is used in the trade schools as an exit exam will certify their graduates as a Graduate Technician, or Gcap credential, indicating that this technician, while possessing knowledge of the eight categories of appliance repair, lacks field experience. After working in the field and with the endorsement of their employer, they can upgrade their credentials to that of a Master Technician. The next two levels require that the applicant have at least two years of field service experience to apply. The technician who specializes in a specific area such as laundry or refrigeration can be certified as a Certified Technician or Tcap credentials in his selected areas of expertise. The highest level of certification is that of a Master Technician who is certified in all eight modules and is capable of performing at the highest level of expectation of the consumer.

While this exam is used to certify the personal knowledge of appliance service technicians and is used as an exit exam for most approved colleges and trade school programs, our goal in the future would be for its application by responsible manufacturers who want to reduce their warranty burden by making this exam a prerequisite to do warranty work on their products.

In an ever-changing field, the Cap Exam needs to be ever-changing as well. With this in mind the exam is updated yearly by a team of members made up of business owners, technician, manufacturers and members of the educational system. As industry technologies change... so does the CAP exam. This is the only appliance repair certification program that is approved by the International Standards Organization (ISO) and is written using a set of competencies that are updated yearly.

This certification exam costs \$130 and is a proctored test, which means it is usually given at a library or a testing facility. In addition, most local parts distributors will also offer it. The exam is also offered at PSA's annual convention for free and can be taken anytime, from the beginning to the end of the convention. It takes 2 to 3 hours depending on your knowledge. The test is given as part of our educational system under the heading G/Cap (Graduate certified appliance professional) at no charge, as we see this as a way to invest in our industry's technicians of the future.

NAHB Puts 10 Year Average Lifespan on Home Appliances

By Joyce Koballa jkoballa@heraldstandard.com

While older appliances seem to have stood the test of time, statistics from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) estimate the average lifespan of today's major household components is slightly above 10 years.

The true longevity of any household material depends on maintenance, use, quality of installation, and climate conditions, according to a report from NAHB and Bank of America.

A gas range was listed by NAHB as lasting the longest at up to 15 years compared with 19 years in 1993. New dryers and refrigerators were projected to last around 13 years, while trash compactors were projected to last six years and and microwaves and dishwashers, nine years.

Alan Thompson, appliance manager at Reese Warehouse in Smithfield, said most of today's major appliances are made to last between seven to 10 years.

Thompson said a lot of people opt to replace an appliance when the cost is higher than half the price of a comparable new model. "A lot of folks with the cost of service are hesitant to have a machine (fixed) that's seven or eight years old and ready to go on the blink," said Thompson.

For the most part, Thompson said major appliance manufacturers offer a one year warranty with the exception of Speed Queen, which is three years.

Thompson added that Speed Queen is currently the most heavy duty washer on the market.

"It's tested to outlast other machines, he said. "It's like what everybody's grandma had."

Thompson further stated that some companies such as Maytag test their machines, which are known for twice the motor life. However, Thompson said any appliance can wear out faster when a person is using it more often because the components aren't made as heavy as in the past.

Over the past couple of decades, advances in appliances and electronics have changed the way energy is used in a home. Through the U.S. Department of Energy's appliance standards, manufacturers are developing new, more efficient appliances that are saving consumers money on their energy bills. Consumer Reports said replacing a 20-year-old refrigerator with a new, energy-efficient one could save as much as \$100 a year.

When buying a secondhand appliance, consumers need to consider product safety because it may be unknown if the previous owner has properly maintained it.

While receipts and user manuals are good records, homeowners do not always keep them.

Consumers can find out when an appliance was manufactured by locating a nameplate or model and serial numbers on the appliance itself, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers said.

The nameplate may display the month and year that a product was manufactured while the model and serial numbers can also be used to call the manufacturer and request the information. It can also be found on the company's website.

Because appliances are not biodegradable, they can be recycled while those that don't work can also be used for scrap metal. Many retailers that sell major appliances offer to dispose of an old one at no extra cost while consumers can also contact their local municipality to find out where they can be taken to be disposed of.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency also provides information on its website for household appliance disposal.

BAT's All Over the Country!

PSA's Basic Appliance Training (BAT) initiative is continuing to sweep the country in 2015!

The BAT program focuses on basic principles and repair functions related to electricity, gas and refrigeration, the core basis of a successful appliance service technician. The BAT training provides a solid foundation for new technicians, along with a strong refresher course for more experienced techs that will make the product specific training offered by manufacturers more understandable and also help to make your technicians more efficient and effective.

There is one BAT class confirmed in early 2015- please keep your eye on the December PSA News and our web site www.psaworld.com, for the complete 2015 BAT and PSA training schedule...

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|-------------------|---|
| March- | NASC 2015- Orlando, FL March 30-April 2 |
| May- | Fox Appliance Parts- Atlanta, GA May 19, 20, 21
Sundberg America- Chicago, IL May 12 ,13, 14 |
| June- | Dey Distributing- Denver, CO (dates tbd)
All Brand Appliance Parts- Boston, MA June 23, 24, 25 |
| August- | Fox Appliance Parts- Miami, FL (dates tbd) |
| September- | Tribble's Appliance Parts- Fairfield, NJ (dates tbd) |
| October- | Dey Distributing- Minneapolis – St Paul, MN (dates tbd) |
| November- | Pending |
| December- | Appliance Parts Depot- Phoenix, AZ (dates tbd) |

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Day 2- Basic: Gas

Gas Basics, Safety, Characteristics
Fuel Gas Code requirements for Gas appliances Gas testing devices
Gas Ranges, operate and test components
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Gas Water Heaters, operation and testing components

Day 3-Basic: Refrigeration

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Thoughts from the Executive Director

By Randy Carney, PSA Executive Director

Ahhhhhhh...February is nearing an end. I sit glaring outside at a snowstorm and ready for temperatures dipping to a ridiculous -19 degrees, as I hear Don Holman telling of 10+ inches of snow in Chattanooga, TN. I hear the Weather Channel in the background and their new winter storm names (Remus? Really?). And then I start thinking that baseball spring training has started and a smile starts to grow. And then I realize that in a month we'll be down in Orlando at NASC 2015 and.... Crap, I have a lot of work to do. The smile and daydreaming will have to wait.



On to this month's musings!

- As noted above, and throughout this edition, NASC 2015 in Orlando, FL is coming up quickly, and we hope that you are planning to join us for 4 very busy days. We are looking forward to seeing our friends from across the industry at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, and hope that you are coming in hungry for a healthy dose of technical training, business management classes and a lot of fun and comradery. The schedule is up on psaworld.com, and while it will likely be tweaked over the next few weeks, you'll get the general flavor of the convention. We're looking forward to seeing you!
- One of the major decisions many service providers are making are whether or not to partner with Third Party Administrators (TPA's). We have several TPA's that are taking part in our Trade Show at NASC 2015, and we urge you to give these companies a look... there are a lot of "fly by nights" out there, but these companies are not among them- they are here to speak to you and provide you with opportunities to grow your business. Companies that show up to speak directly to you are the ones that you need to consider partnering with, and we hope that you'll take time to visit with these service professionals.
- After attending some meetings and being involved in some conference calls, it seems dealing with poor on-line reviews remains a thorn in the side of many in our industry. As I wrote back in our November, 2014 edition of PSA News, take the initiative in these cases and work to repair the bad review. There are things that can be done to address even an anonymous complaint, and at the very least, other readers and potential customers will see that you have made the effort to correct the issue. You can take a look at the entire article by looking at our back issues on psaworld.com- it seems to be a concern that won't go away, so take a look and be proactive in your handling of poor on-line reviews.
- If you have been assisted by someone in the appliance industry, let us know and we'll give them a shout out in PSA News. There are a lot of people that provide assistance on a regular basis- they might be at your local parts supplier, a particularly helpful technical representative, or someone on PSANet. It might even be someone in your own company! Let us know about it- drop me a note at rcarney@psaworld.com, and we'll be happy to share your story!

Technician Evaluation

Here's a Great Hiring Tool!

When preparing to hire new appliance technicians for your business, it's important to make use of all the tools that are available to you in order to make the best choice.

The PSA Technician Evaluation program evaluates the skill level of your prospective employee by testing them in 8 key categories- Customer Relations, Core Knowledge, Cleaning Products, Convenience Products, Cooling Products, Gas Cooking, Electric Cooking, and Microwave Cooking. The material will help you gauge the fundamental knowledge level of your candidate, while also identifying areas where additional time may need to be spent in training.

This is also a great tool to use in order to test your existing technician workforce in identifying areas where training or mentoring may be required.

The PSA Technician Evaluation program can be ordered through the PSA website at psaworld.com/member_tools. The cost is \$39.95.

Call 1-888-777-8851 or www.psaworld.com and click on Member Tools

Every Day is a Blessing!

By Jim Campbell, MCap

Whether you have any religious convictions or not, you have to admit that every day is a blessing. Yes, we have our trials and tribulations, but as adults, we have seen that this is what makes us stronger. Personally, I think we do a pretty good job of overcoming the odds in many cases. Look at our careers in the appliance service industry for example. For those of us who have been around awhile, a lot of obstacles have been overcome in dealing with manufacturers. From the results we have experienced so far, there are obstacles facing us now that require some thought. It mostly revolves around the OEM's, who have been going thru some pretty chaotic challenges themselves.



First and foremost, I support every manufacturer in their effort to make a quality product. It is not their fault that things like the Japanese tsunami, for example, caused havoc in the circuit board manufacturing sector. With no vendors left, OEM's had to scramble for a solution. The solution is recycling and remanufacture. This is why so many domestic electronics shops now have a plethora of business right now. So, we as servicer providers, need to recognize this shortage and look to our own means of getting these boards repaired and back into circulation.

Sure, you can always go the core-charge route, but if you have more than one bad board lying around, consider donating them to your favorite rebuilder. If you don't want them back for stock later, perhaps the shop will give you a discount on your next repair. Maybe they'd trade a stack of old board for one new one, you never know what might fall your way. In any event, we keep it 'in the family', so to speak. The next issue that needs to be considered is the closed-door approach to non-authorized servicers. Is this a good idea? I look forward to your comments on PSANet.

The third, and potentially the most critical issue we have to deal with is obtaining factory training when OEM's are 'too busy' to attend every service conference. As a training and certification organization, PSA considers this to be an opportunity to expand into training on actual products as they are introduced to the market. At NASC 2015 this year, we will begin what we hope is a beneficial program to include in our menu of services. Our sponsors have been gracious enough to donate the first product for the event, and we will announce the class soon!

As appliance servicers, we are a hard-working group just trying to make a decent living in this world and provide for our families the best we can. To do this requires planning outside the box at times. Each of our members has a voice in PSA, but what is missing is the willingness to share the passion you have for this industry by serving as a committee member. Every good plan begins with a good idea, and I know most of you are chock full of 'em. Please see one of us at the convention and ask about how you can help. We are overcoming the obstacles, one speed bump at a time!

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