

# **Certified Snow Professional: Creating Leaders in the Industry**

**By Ellen Kobach**

## ***How do you certify someone to plow snow?***

Since the Snow & Ice Management Association began offering the Certified Snow Professional (CSP) program to snow and ice contractors, we've encountered some skeptical attitudes towards it. Early on, many people couldn't believe that there was a certification program dedicated entirely to the snow and ice management industry. Throughout the years the SIMA staff has traveled across North America, promoting the program at trade shows and other events. No matter the location, inevitably the question is asked; "How do you certify someone to plow snow?"

The answer to this question has not always been easy to determine. As many contractors who have been in the business for a while know, resources are few and far between, and current information directly related to snow and ice management is almost impossible to find. After years of working through these issues, SIMA launched the CSP program as a way to offer education and training to professionals in the industry. The CSP program has since benefited over 100 CSP's, offering them great resources and an edge over the competition.

In a continuing effort to better the program and consolidate training information, SIMA revised the CSP program this year, and created a set of 6 study modules tied directly to the exam. The content for the study modules was developed by a knowledgeable committee of Certified Snow Professionals. Information was consolidated from a number of different sources, providing a current and relevant knowledge base for CSP candidates to study from.

## ***What do I need to study to become a CSP?***

6 sections comprise the CSP exam, each of them equally important in learning the business and technical aspects of snow and ice management. Studying the information makes for a well-rounded and safety conscious snow professional, and test questions are taken directly from the modules. The study guides are broken up into chapters, and each module features quizzes to test your knowledge. Descriptions of each section are given below:

- **Module 1 – Business:** Covers all aspects of managing a successful snow and ice management business, including finance, business law, and ethical behavior.
- **Module 2 – Human Resource Management:** Covers Human Resource issues in snow and ice management, including staffing, Risk Management, and organization.
- **Module 3 – Marketing:** Covers how to market your business and services, including advertising, promotions, and market research.
- **Module 5 – Sub-Contractors:** Covers all the issues with hiring sub-contractors, including advantages and disadvantages, basic guidelines, and federal laws.
- **Module 5 – Snow & Ice Science:** Covers the scientific knowledge behind snow and ice removal, including basic properties of snow and ice, surfaces, and the use of chemicals.
- **Module 6 – Snow & Ice Operations and Techniques:** Covers the operations and techniques behind snow and ice removal, including preparation for an event and detailed descriptions of equipment and its correct usage.

### ***How will becoming a CSP help my company?***

Currently, there is a direct need for strong, professional business training specific to today's snow and ice management companies. It's becoming increasingly difficult for true professionals to separate themselves from the pack and offer reliable service at a fair price. That's what the CSP program is all about; creating leaders in the industry who are knowledgeable in all areas of snow and ice management and are proud of their CSP distinction. Over 100 owners and managers of successful companies have become CSP certified, and each has benefited greatly from the distinction. Here's what some of them have to say:

"I strongly believe being a CSP has allowed me to sell from a stronger position as a market and industry leader as opposed to any guy off the street with a pickup. I noticed this year when selling new properties or renewing old contracts my CSP has allowed me to speak to our customers from a position of greater knowledge and has added perceived value to our clients"

*- Jim Hornung, Jr. CSP, Elbers Landscape Service Inc. in Buffalo, NY*

"Being a CSP has helped with my insurance costs...Just like the Safety Awards through SIMA, tell your insurance provider that you are a nationally Certified Snow Professional and explain all the information you are tested on. I got a 15% reduction. That alone paid for all the costs of getting my CSP!"

*- Rich Arlington, CSP, Affiliated Grounds Maintenance in Erie, PA*

"CSP has been a way for us to set our company apart from others in our market. We have two managers certified in landscape for our state, and it helps in marketing to specific clients. We feel that the CSP designation will have the same value down the road...It also helps in closing year round contracts because managers are certified in two major seasons, summer and winter."

*- Brian Churchill, CSP/MCLP, The Groundskeeper Inc. in Ashland, MA*

### ***What do I need to do to become a CSP?***

SIMA offers the CSP exam several times a year at different locations across North America. Candidates apply for the exam and submit references, and then sit for the test at their convenience. With this in mind, SIMA is very excited to offer a CSP exam in Michigan during the Michigan Green Association's Annual Trade Show and Convention in March. This is an excellent opportunity to take the newly revised test, and to gain the distinction that will you get you nationally recognized as a leader in the snow and ice industry.

So, the answer to the question "How do you certify someone to plow snow?" is actually a lot more complex than some may think. Snow and ice management is more than simply plowing snow; it is running a business, promoting services, understanding safety, and much, much more.

*For more information about the CSP program, visit [www.sima.org](http://www.sima.org) or contact Ellen, SIMA's Certification Coordinator at 414-375-1940.*