

Draft release
XX March 2008

Training holds key to plant operatives' future

Hundreds of plant operatives in the South West could find themselves unable to work if they fail to complete a new training scheme.

There are currently 5,100 plant operators in the South West out of a total construction workforce of 204,000. And only those possessing a Construction Plant Certification Scheme (CPCS) card are able to use plant machinery.

Launched in 1995, the CPCS card scheme was brought in to raise industry standards, particularly in areas such as health and safety. It is only valid for five years.

However, any plant operative who now reapplies for their CPCS card must first complete a Level 2 NVQ in Plant Operations.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), through its Train to Gain service, is providing funding for plant operatives in the region to complete their first NVQ. The training is being provided by a consortium of specialists led by ConstructionSkills South West.

In order to obtain the NVQ, operatives must firstly complete an On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT), before being reviewed by an independent assessor to see if they are working to a standard equivalent to an NVQ. Operatives must also demonstrate a clear knowledge of health and safety practices, correct lifting procedures together with the CPCS training book.

The Train to Gain service provides impartial, independent advice on training to businesses across the South West to help them meet skills needs. Available since 2006, Train to Gain helps to identify and match workforce training needs to training providers within the region.

To date, Train to Gain has supported more than 1,400 companies in the construction industry. According to the latest statistics from ConstructionSkills, the sector is expected to grow by 4 per cent (in terms of employment) between 2008 and 2012.

Roger Stone, Strategic Adviser for ConstructionSkills South West, explains: “As part of a joint initiative between the LSC and ConstructionSkills, any plant operative that needs to reapply for their CPCS card must first complete a Level 2 NVQ. Given the health and safety considerations of working onsite, it is imperative that operatives demonstrate core competencies.

“The good news is that training is readily available through our network of providers to ensure operatives in the region are fully up to speed. I would strongly urge anyone who needs to reapply for their CPCS card in the near future to contact us now to see how we can help. Without it, operatives simply won't be allowed on site.”

Side Panel

Case Study

Anthony Wilkins from Clevedon has worked in construction for much of his adult life. After starting as a stonemasonry apprentice, he went on to become a site labourer and storeman. Recently, he decided he wanted to take his career in a different direction, and become a telescopic handler.

However, to achieve his goal, and satisfy the requirements of the CPCS scheme, he was required to re-skill. For this, Anthony turned to Plant Skills. Plant Skills is one of 24 training providers in a consortium delivering funded construction-related training to employees in the South West through the Train to Gain service.

Led by ConstructionSkills South West, the sector skills council for construction, and funded by the LSC through Train to Gain, Anthony was able to complete Level 2 NVQ in Plant Operations over a matter of weeks.

In order to obtain his qualification, he undertook an On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT), which allows workers to obtain their industry recognised CPCS card, without having time off-site.

Anthony was accompanied by an assessor on his normal daily routine to ensure he was working to a standard equivalent to an NVQ. He also had to complete individual study to make certain he had covered all aspects of the CPCS training book.

Anthony explains: “Sub-contractors with recognised qualifications are much in demand. As a result of completing my NVQ, I now have companies chasing me for work, rather than the other way around. By completing the NVQ I have been able to go on and obtain my full CPCS card, which shows that I am competent at my job and have health and safety awareness, which more and more contractors are now requesting from sub-contractors to work on site.

“I think obtaining these qualifications has helped give me an edge over other employees and employers appreciate me more for the skills and experience I can offer.”

Ends

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Learning & Skills Council

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world-class standards. Our vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country. For more information visit www.lsc.gov.uk/westofengland

Train to Gain

Train to Gain is a service from the Learning and Skills Council, helping businesses get the training they need to succeed. An important element of the Train to Gain service is skills brokerage that offers free impartial advice, and helps find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training providers to meet business needs. To find out more call 0800 015 5545 or visit www.traintogain.gov.uk.