

Part 6 - Discussion Paper #4

Certification and Accreditation

Issue:

Part 6 (Training) of the Transport of Dangerous Goods Regulations (TDGR) requires a person who handles, offers for transport, transports or imports dangerous goods to be “adequately trained” and hold a training certificate. However, there is ambiguity around what it means for a person to be adequately trained and the usefulness of a training certificate is questionable; it only demonstrates that a person has received training – it does not evaluate the person’s level of knowledge or skill. Furthermore, the variability of options available contributes to a mixed market for transportation of dangerous goods (TDG) training that can result in inconsistently trained persons.

This discussion paper examines a number of options that may increase the consistency of training by validating the training offered through independent quality monitoring and endorsement from a higher authority. These options include the accreditation of training institutions, and the certification of trainers and employees.

Background/Context:

Accreditation: Accreditation is the certification of an institution or organization to train and administer the testing of an employee or individual’s competency and knowledge. Accreditation by a government, regulatory body or other industry recognized authority provides legitimacy to the training institution and its training material and provides assurance that certificates obtained through the institution are an accepted proof of competency.

Certification: Certification of an employee or trainer is a recognized credential granted by a certification body or other legitimate authority upon demonstration of competency. Competency is the measurable skill or set of skills and level of knowledge required to perform job-specific tasks. Certification by a government body, such as Transport Canada (TC), provides a nationally recognized assurance that certain competencies have been demonstrated.

Accreditation and certification typically require the use of a prescribed set of learning and testing materials, an audit of teaching methods, the administration and passing of an approved test of essential information, and/or other predetermined criteria respectively.

Current TDG training regime:

A number of private organizations offer TDG training to persons who handle, offer for transport, transport, or import dangerous goods. While TC maintains an online list of organizations across Canada that offer training, it does not validate or endorse these institutions or their trainers¹.

¹ <http://wwwapps.tc.gc.ca/saf-sec-sur/3/train-form/search-eng.aspx>

Furthermore, there is a diverse range of options offered for training in terms of cost, duration, and content. For example, courses can range in price and vary widely in format from online self-learning to multi-day classroom sessions. Content also ranges from general “TDG 101” material to more specialized, mode-and-role specific advanced courses.

This inconsistency contributes to a varied market for TDG training. It can result in inconsistently trained operators and employees, potentially increasing the risk associated with the transport of dangerous goods.

Proposed Options:

Accreditation of institutions and/or the certification of trainers or persons who handle, offer for transport, transport or import could potentially be administered by TC.

Accreditation: Training institutions are already “certifying” handlers, shippers, and receivers of dangerous goods in Canada; however, accreditation of these institutions would allow TC to ensure that there is consistency in the quality of the TDG courses offered. Training institutions could apply to TC for an audit of their training courses and programs. The completion of a successful audit by TC would result in the training institution receiving “Accredited Status”. This accreditation could be time-limited (e.g., 5 years) and be subject to additional audits, as determined by TC. For example, regulatory amendments could trigger a review process.

Certification: Two certification options exist: First, TC could formalize the training process by offering a certification to trainers who provide TDG training to employees/regulatees. Trainers who successfully complete the TC program would then be certified to provide independent TDG training to the public. This could be done either through an online training platform or through classroom courses. Certification could be time-limited, and could cover scalable material, ranging from certifying a trainer for base knowledge TDG (TDG 101) courses to more advanced certification based on specific dangerous goods classes and job functions

Alternatively, TC could centralize the training and certification process by developing a TDG certification program that would involve establishing standard criteria to be used in the training and testing of employees. The successful completion of a course would result in a TDG Certificate awarded to the individual. It could also be time-limited, and could cover scalable material. For example, TC could develop a basic course “TDG 101” to cover common knowledge of TDG. More advanced training, based on specific dangerous goods or job-functions, could be the responsibility of the employer to provide.

These options would allow TC to ensure that a high quality of training is provided to regulatees by setting the standards by which to measure these institutions and individuals, allow for portability of training certificates across provinces and modes, and would serve to ensure consistency of training across Canada.

Benefits of an Accreditation and/or Certification regime:

Accreditation

- Provides a means to audit training institutions for TDG training in Canada.
- Contributes to public safety by ensuring that TDG training is administered by institutions that meet established quality standards.
- Assists in providing consistent cross-Canada training for TDG Regulations.
- Supports the portability of TDG training for employees across Canada.

Certifications

- Provides consistent quality monitoring of training for TDG training in Canada.
- Contributes to public safety by ensuring that employees are well trained and employable across Canada.
- Assists in providing consistent cross-Canada TDG training.
- Supports portability of training for trainers across Canada, thus allowing for employment mobility between training institutions.
- Supports the portability of certificates offered by TC or another recognized Canadian body.

Potential Proposals:

- 1) Develop a TC Accreditation Program for private institutions, who can then award valid TDG certificates to employees. A TDG Accreditation Program would determine the criteria against which to measure the accuracy, applicability, and credibility of the training institutions and curriculum. It could involve the development of an audit process for institutions wishing to receive or renew accreditation status. This could also require the development of standardized criteria (curriculum and/or tests) for training institutions to follow.
- 2) Develop a TC-endorsed Certification Program for instructors. The instructors would need to demonstrate, through TC administered written tests and on-the-job evaluations, that they have the knowledge base and expertise to teach a standardized curriculum, and can effectively transmit knowledge and experience to students. Once the instructors pass the evaluation, they receive their certification from TC, which would enable certified instructors to establish their own training institutions or work for existing institutions across Canada.
- 3) Develop a TC-endorsed or operated TDG 101 certification program for employees and employers that handle, offer for transport, transport, or import dangerous goods in Canada. This could include the development of training modules or programs. Advanced training on advanced aspects of TDG would be the responsibility of the employer to provide.