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# Assessing competency

## Personnel working in hazardous areas

*For the first time, competency of personnel working in hazardous areas can be certified.*

On 15 July 2010, IECEx, the IEC System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres, issued the world's first IECEx Certificate of Personnel Competence to a person located in the UK (United Kingdom).

This personal and non-transmittable certificate gives independent proof to any potential employer that this person has the required qualifications and experience to work on, or repair, electrical equipment located in hazardous areas.

It not only provides a clear competitive advantage to people who work in this field, but, for the very first time, gives companies a tool to ensure that contractors who work on or repair their equipment in explosive environments have the competency to do so. This need was repeatedly expressed by the oil and gas industry and has resulted in this new type of certification.

**“Some of the highest industrial explosive risks are to be found in sugar refineries, grain handling and storage silos, wood and metal saw mills.”**

Potentially explosive areas

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### Safety in Ex areas is a must

Safety in hazardous areas is non-negotiable. When equipment is not installed or repaired according to strict Ex (explosive) standards, the outcome can be devastating. What may be tolerable in non-explosive atmospheres can directly lead to explosions that not only destroy property but cost human lives or cause severe injuries. Intuitively, one assumes that danger lurks only in obvious industries, such as the chemical, mining and oil and gas industries. This assumption is incorrect. Industries with some of the highest explosive risks include sugar refineries, grain handling and storage silos and wood and metal saw mills, to name but a few.

While certification programmes for personnel already exist in a number of industries – in particular in the service sectors, including healthcare, for example – this is a first for the Ex industry.

### A world's premiere for the Ex industry

To obtain an IECEx Personnel Competence Certificate, a person will have to undergo a series of knowledge tests and an assessment of qualifications and experience. The IECEx Personnel Competence Scheme uses several criteria to establish a person's level of competence when working in Ex industries. The person under assessment must be able to perform the following tasks in or near explosive areas:

- apply basic principles of protection
- perform classification of hazardous areas
- design electrical installations

- install explosion-protected equipment and wiring systems
- test, maintain, overhaul and repair explosion-protected equipment
- perform visual, close or detailed inspection of electrical installations
- perform audit inspection of electrical installations

Regular re-assessment ensures that the certified person maintains these competencies. The certificate is personal, non-transmittable and valid across international borders. Along with the certificate, IECEX also provides a wallet-sized identification card with photo for instant proof of certification. It can be obtained through an approved IECEX Certification Body.

For further information contact: [www.iecex.com](http://www.iecex.com).

## First approved ExCBs

The world's first Personnel Competence Certificate was issued by [SIRA Certification](#) in the UK. SIRA was recognized in July 2010 as an approved IECEX ExCB (Personnel Competence Ex Certification Body). To date, one other ExCB, [Baseefa](#), has been approved to issue certificates under the IECEX Personnel Competence Scheme. Both SIRA and Baseefa are world leaders in the CA (Conformity Assessment) solutions field specializing in the safety of equipment used in potentially explosive atmospheres. In the coming months, several more ExCBs are expected to be approved as recognized IECEX ExCBs..

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### IEC links

IECEX  
IEC System for Certification to Standards relating to  
Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres  
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