



CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

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IECEX key to safety in hazardous areas

Continuing education has become a given. Today, education doesn't stop with graduation. The technologies and tools that have emerged in the last two decades to help people do their jobs are evolving ever more rapidly. Those who fail to keep abreast of new developments lose competitiveness and may even go out of business.

Most companies provide their management and staff with additional training on a regular basis. But while it is important for any company to keep in touch with the world as it evolves, continuing education is even more vital in the Ex industry.

IECEX personnel competencies assessment

The Ex industry, comprises all areas where a concentration of flammable gases, liquids or combustible dusts may be present. These areas are called explosive atmospheres or hazardous locations. They include oil rigs, chemical processing plants, coal mines, sugar refineries, grain handling and storage sites, refuelling stations, and more. Working in such environments requires highly skilled people who are well aware of the potential dangers.

Safety is essential in these sectors and doesn't depend on the equipment alone. The personnel operating and handling the equipment is at the heart of the security issue. People working in hazardous areas are often subjected to extreme climatic conditions, on oil rigs for example. They need total confidence that the equipment they are operating is safe and reliable. They also need to be able to trust their skills and those of the people they work with.

IEC and IECEX make a difference

This is where standardization and Conformity Assessment come in to make a difference. The IEC, through its [TC \(Technical Committee\) 31](#): Equipment for explosive atmospheres, and [IECEX](#), its System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres, offers the perfect tools on which personnel and equipment in Ex atmospheres

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- ▶ IEC Meetings - new online tool
- ▶ Grid ComForum - smart grid
- ▶ New IEC review directives

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- ▶ TC 105 work on fuel cells

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- ▶ Honduras forms a NEC

SPECIAL

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TC AFFAIRS

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Safety and continuing education for personnel is particularly important in the Ex industry. It doesn't depend on the equipment alone

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can rely for utmost safety and reliability.

The [IEC 60079](#) series of International Standards on explosive atmospheres covers many of the elements that have to be taken into consideration when working in an Ex environment: types of protection, classification of hazardous areas, repair and overhaul, to name but a few.

Certification and assessment of equipment, facilities and people

IECEX provides assessment and certification of equipment, repair and overhaul facilities, personnel skills for the Ex industry. The recently introduced IECEX Certification of Personnel Competencies Scheme should prove to be very successful in meeting industry needs. As a global certification system that responds to the needs of a global industry sector, IECEX guarantees the highest possible levels of safety for anyone working in explosive atmospheres.

The recent formal endorsement by the United Nations, via the [UNECE](#) (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), of IECEX as the best practice model for verification of compliance with International Standards is testament to the respect gained by IECEX in serving the needs of both government and industry for testing and certification in the Ex sector.

Advocating safety through conferences and workshops

IECEX officers and international experts regularly promote the system's activities through conferences, seminars and workshops, where they outline and explain the advantages and benefits of international certification.

[Schneider Electric](#)'s Terence Hazel, who is Secretary of [PCIC](#) (Petroleum & Chemical Industry Committee Europe), will present IECEX activities at a CED (Continuing Education on Demand) seminar organized by the [IEEE](#)'s (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) chapter in Houston, Texas, United States of America. The two-day tutorial entitled "IEC System Design Considerations" will take place on 6-7 April 2010 and include a section on Ex atmospheres. As oil is a major industrial sector in Texas, the seminar should have considerable interest for local participants, mainly engineers.

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RELATED INFORMATION

• IEC links

- [IECEX](#)
IEC System for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres
- [IEC 60079](#):
Explosive atmospheres - Part 0: Equipment - General requirements
- [IEC TC 31](#):
Equipment for explosive atmospheres, and IECEX, its System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres

• External links

- [IEEE](#):
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
- [IEEE](#):
Houston Chapter of the IEEE
- [PCIC Europe](#):
Petroleum & Chemical Industry Committee Europe
- [Schneider Electric](#)
- [UNECE](#):
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

