



# COR™: The time has come to



# GET CERTIFIED

Since being introduced to Ontario, the Certificate of Recognition (COR™) program has gained momentum and is establishing itself as the future of occupational health and safety in the province. Of the more than 230 firms registered, 24 have already been awarded certification. The others are working diligently through the various stages of the program.

With a history that goes back more than 20 years, COR™ is a well-established, Canada-wide certification program that assesses and develops a company's health and safety management system. IHSA brought COR™ to Ontario in 2011 in order to raise the standards of injury and illness prevention across the province. The program focuses on 19 elements that promote healthy and safe behaviour. To become certified, a firm must first pass an internal audit of its health and safety policy and program, and then pass an external, third-party audit.

The fact that COR™ is being adopted so rapidly in Ontario is not a surprise since it has already proved itself in the western provinces. But what is a bit unexpected is who is becoming certified. "We have a significant number of smaller firms with 15, 20, 30 people working towards certification. It's not only the large, multimillion-dollar companies that are getting involved with COR™ at this early stage, as some may have expected", says Carlos Figueira, a COR™ consultant at IHSA.

## Setting the standard

One of those smaller firms that Mr. Figueira referred to is Allerion Oilfield Services. Allerion, a company with about 20 employees, is a leader in aboveground oil tank services and recently became COR™ certified. In

addition to its work in southwestern Ontario, Allerion is active in Alberta's oil industry. It has been COR™ certified in Alberta for several years, so the program wasn't new to them. According to Chad Burke, the Health, Safety, and Environment Manager at Allerion, COR™ has become a regular part of the bidding process out west. "We're not there yet in Ontario, but I see it moving in the same direction," he says. "We recently had a meeting with one of our main clients where we had to show our commitment to safety. We told them we were COR™ certified and explained the process to them. They were very impressed with what we had achieved and that a third party had audited our firm."

That point was echoed by Charlie Webb, President and CEO of Anderson-Webb. "I can see COR™ becoming a standard here, and I think it's long overdue," he says. Anderson-Webb is a mechanical contractor firm that has been in business in the Sarnia area for 28 years. "I think those firms that don't meet COR™ standards will eventually be the losers when it comes to getting work with some of the major companies in Ontario," says Mr. Webb. He went on to describe a recent project at a refinery where Anderson-Webb did more than 100,000 hours of work in four weeks with about 550 tradespeople and zero recordable injuries. He attributes this accomplishment in large part to the rigorous requirements of the COR™ program.

Another company that makes health and safety a priority is Atlas-Apex, which is well on its way to becoming the first roofing contractor to obtain COR™ certification in Ontario. As a member of the National Roofing Alliance, Atlas-Apex has been hearing about COR™ for some time. "It's been coming

Does your health and safety system measure up?



up at association meetings. Members in Manitoba and Alberta are already COR™ certified,” says John Petrachek, President and General Manager at Atlas-Apex. “I think it’s going to be a requirement for larger firms with work outside Ontario,” he says. The Vice President of Operations, Steve Murray, added, “If a large client is going to require their Alberta firms to be COR™ certified, they’re going to require their Ontario firms to be COR™ certified too, even if it’s not yet the norm here.”

### Digging Deep

Essentially, COR™ is an audit. Like other audits, COR™ finds gaps that may exist in your current health and safety program. What sets COR™ apart is its systematic thoroughness. Tracey Way, Health and Safety Coordinator with Grid Link, a small utility contractor in Thunder Bay, has been involved with other audits since joining the company in 2008. “We have quite a bit of history of working with a formal health and safety system, but we thought COR™ would give us an outside perspective on what’s missing and where we could improve,” she says. She was surprised at how deep COR™ goes. “Having gone through other audits, I felt that we were well prepared for the COR™ process. However, COR™ was much more intimate to our business. I had to go through every single detail of what we do.” Grid Link is the first northern Ontario firm to obtain COR™ certification.

Atlas-Apex’s Health and Safety Director, Maureen Kane, described a similar experience. “I was very surprised that COR™ was as thorough as it was. It definitely picked up some gaps in our program and identified areas where we were skirting around the issue instead of dealing with it directly,” she says. Atlas-Apex opened an office in Kitchener a few years ago and has plans for further expansion in Canada and the United States. COR™ will eventually help standardize health

and safety at all their locations. Steve Murray, Vice President of Operations, valued the fact that COR™ helped remove redundancies in their health and safety program. “When something comes up, your knee-jerk reaction is to add another form to the policy and program. When you do that, you end up with too many forms out there and the person who has to fill them all in is confused. COR™ really helped to fix that and make things more effective,” he says.

### Getting buy-in where it counts

While going through the process, some companies found that a lot of their success was due to the level of worker involvement required by COR™. Having a superior health and safety program only gets you halfway there. To be effective, the workers really have to be part of it. “When I was doing the employee interviews, a pleasant surprise for me was the eagerness of our crew to be involved in this,” says Ms. Way from Grid Link. Mr. Webb from Anderson-Webb had a similar experience with the employee interviews. The way that COR™ includes the workers along with the health and safety staff is something he considered a major strength of the program. “It’s something we hadn’t seen before,” he says.

### Start now

If COR™ has the same success in Ontario that it has had in other provinces, health and safety standards will be raised throughout Ontario. That means more workers will return home to their families at the end of the day, and ultimately that’s what this is all about.

Don’t wait. Join the firms that are working towards certification. For more information about the program, visit [ihsa.ca/cor](http://ihsa.ca/cor)