

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association National Construction Safety Officer Certificate

Frequently asked questions

1. Why has IHSA changed the Construction Health & Safety Officer (CHSO) Program to a National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO) Program?

IHSA has changed the CHSO program to the NCSO program to align with other provinces and territories and ensure equivalency criteria are met in accordance with the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA) Agreement. This will allow IHSA's program to meet the higher National Standard.

IHSA needed to update the requirements of the CHSO program to meet the construction industry standards of health & safety performance.

Changes to the process were needed to meet the ongoing demands for NCSOs and to ensure that they demonstrate proficiency in the occupational health and safety environment of the construction industry. IHSA wants to support workers and encourage them to become health and safety professionals. NCSO training will help increase the number of COR™ Internal Auditors and Construction Health & Safety Reps serving the construction industry.

2. Will those who are already CHSOs be grandfathered into the NCSO program?

No. There will be no grandfathering in of existing CHSOs. All CHSOs will need to reapply and follow the complete process to receive NCSO Status.

3. What has changed in the program?

The requirements for CHSO Certification were five years of practical health and safety experience and successful completion of the following courses:

- WHMIS
- Working at Heights – Fundamentals of Fall Prevention (as of April 1, 2015)
- JHSC Certification Part One (formerly *Construction Health & Safety Rep*)
- JHSC Certification Part Two: Construction (formerly *Sector-Specific* and *Simulated Hazard Analysis*)
- Basics of Supervising
- Basic Auditing Principles
- First Aid/CPR

For NCSO Certification, we have changed it to three years of practical health and safety experience within the past ten years and we have added the following new requirements:

- An additional four programs that must be completed:
 - COR™ Essentials
 - COR™ Internal Auditor
 - Introduction to Hazard & Risk Management
 - Defensive Driving General
- A “code of ethics” criteria
- A knowledge verification examination – National exam, Provincial exam, and simulated workplace assessment

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- Maintenance criteria
 - Proof of renewal for relevant courses
 - Ongoing professional development must be demonstrated beyond the required courses. A total of 18 class hours must be completed (any number of courses can be taken as long as the time completed amounts to 18 hours) and must be taken within three years of receiving the NCSO Certificate or last renewal. These courses must be in line with the competencies set out by the other courses in the NCSO Certificate or must enhance the NCSO's working skills.
 - The continuation of this professional development on a three-year renewal cycle.

4. What happens with the courses that have an expiry date?

Courses with an expiry date must be valid at the time of application to the NCSO program and should not expire through the application process.

Up-to-date certificates will need to be supplied every three years for the maintenance portion of the certificate. All renewals of courses that contain an expiry date must be done in a timely fashion and evidence of their validity must be provided. Failure to do so will result in NCSO status becoming inactive. IHSA will also accept records of training or transcripts. Transcripts for IHSA courses can be requested through our website at https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa_request_form_certificate_reprint

5. Will applicants receive equivalency for courses taken elsewhere?

Equivalency will be decided by the NCSO Committee. Documentation must be supplied by the applicant and must include:

- A course description including total duration that meets or exceeds current IHSA requirements.
- Proof of course completion within a period of five (5) years from date of application for equivalency.
- Verification that the course was taken from a recognized institution, including but not limited to a college, university, trade school, or safety association.

6. Has the administrative process changed?

The NCSO administrative process includes the following:

- Applications will be approved by the NCSO Committee.
- Applicants will be able to contact or send their information to a designated administrator: NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca
- Applicants will be required to complete all required courses.
- Applicants will be required to complete the NCSO application.
- Applicants will be required to provide a résumé outlining proof of practical construction experience.
- Applicants will be required to provide proof of certificate renewals or transcripts or equivalent for relevant courses.
- Applicants will be required to complete a National exam, Provincial exam, and simulated workplace assessment.

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- Applicants will be required to sign a code of ethics.
- There will be a complaints and appeals process as well as an application renewal process

7. When were the changes implemented?

- April 1, 2016 –New criteria introduced.
- September 1, 2016 – New applicants required to meet the new rules.
- September 1, 2016 – New applications received.
- September 1, 2017 – All existing CHSOs are required to meet the new NCSO requirements.

8. What happened to those who had CHSO status in the past?

- As of September 1, 2016, IHSA will no longer accept CHSO applications.
- As of September 1, 2016, new NCSO applications will be accepted.
- Existing approved CHSO certificates remained valid until August 31, 2017.
- Anything received and processed after September 1, 2016, was subject to the new application process and criteria.
- As of September 1, 2017, CHSO was no longer recognized.

9. What was the process to notify CHSOs?

Companies that had approved CHSOs on record with IHSA received written notification advising them of the changes and new criteria. Information was also shared by IHSA through its communication channels. Failure to meet the additional requirements will mean their CHSO status will not be valid.

10. Why is there now a test component?

A test is required to align our program with the National Standard. All participants will be expected to complete a National exam, a Provincial exam and a simulated workplace assessment as part of the NCSO process.

Existing out-of-province applicants who have previously completed the National Exam created by CFCSA (after January 1, 2017) must provide proof of completion prior to taking the Provincial Exam. Valid documentation must be supplied by the provincial agency.

11. What happens if someone does not pass the knowledge verification exams?

The pass requirement will be a minimum of 75%. If someone does not pass the exam, they will have to re-challenge after a 90-day waiting period. If they are not successful after three tries they must start the application process all over again.

12. Where and when can applicants write the exams?

Once applications are completed and approved, applicants will be notified by the administrator via email about upcoming dates and locations in order to register for the exams.

13. Why does the applicant need to sign a code of ethics?

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Many safety professional recognition certifications adhere to a professional code of conduct as a way to uphold the integrity of the performance and expectations of an individual who achieves NCSO Certification. Any breach of the code of ethics may result in a formal review and subsequent suspension or termination of the NCSO designation may occur.

The code of ethics must be included in the application package or the application will not be approved. It can be found in this package or on the [NCSO webpage](#).

14. What are the benefits of the NCSO certification?

Many employers recognize the NCSO Certificate as a value-added asset associated with someone who has interest in pursuing a career in health and safety within the construction industry.

- Meeting the requirements of the NCSO Certificate demonstrates a person's skill level, education, and work effort. NCSOs will be recognized province-to-province as having met the requirements of a National Standard.
- NCSOs are qualified to serve as COR™ Internal Auditors and Construction Health & Safety Representatives.
- The certification will make NSCOs more marketable to potential employers.
- Remaining current and up-to-date with industry trends and professional development will make NCSOs more effective at their jobs.

15. What happens to past CHSOs who have not applied for NCSO status?

As of September 1, 2017 IHSA no longer accepts or recognizes CHSOs. Therefore the certificate indicating you are a CHSO will no longer be valid and will cease to be recognized by IHSA.

16. Where can we direct specific questions?

- The IHSA.ca website has a dedicated web page for CHSOs/NSCOs: www.ihsa.ca/NCSO
- Specific inquiries can be sent via email to NCSOAdministrator@ihsa.ca

17. How long does the process take?

The process involves the successful completion of 11 required courses, the submission of a completed application with supporting documents, two proctored examinations, and completion of the application with supporting documentation. The duration is dependent on the applicant's ability to meet the requirements specified by the certificate at the time of application and the applicant's ability to schedule their time to attend and successfully complete the required courses and administrative tasks.

18. What is the total cost?

The cost is dependent on member and non-member fees that are subject to change at the discretion of IHSA. Visit our website at www.ihsa.ca for details on current pricing.

19. Why are some of the required courses related to the Certificate of Recognition (COR™) program?

The COR™ program is an evidence-based audit tool used to assess a firm's Health & Safety Management System (HSMS) for compliance and continuous improvement. NCSOs play an important role in ensuring that the HSMS is properly implemented, communicated, and measured to meet industry standards of performance. By completing the COR™ courses, NCSOs enhance their understanding and knowledge base of health and safety practices and leading indicators.

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20. Is there an appeal process if equivalency is not granted?

Yes. Visit our website at to review the [process for an appeal](#).

21. Are there situations where an applicant's NCSO status can be taken away?

A person's NCSO status can be revoked by IHSA upon findings as the result of an investigation from a written complaint, failure to abide by the requirements specified in the program, or a violation of conduct associated with professional ethics.

22. How does the applicant get equivalent NCSO status from one province to another?

There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between members of the Canadian Federation of Construction Safety Associations (CFCSA) that participate in the NCSO program. This MOU means that applicants who have received their NCSO status in another province and have successfully written and passed the National exam after January 1, 2017 in another province, need only to challenge the Ontario Provincial exam and Workplace Assessment. However if the applicant has not successfully completed the National exam in the past, the National examination must also be successfully completed before NCSO status for Ontario will be granted.

23. I have already taken Construction Health and Safety Rep and/or Sector Simulated. Do I have to take the new Certification Programs (JHSC Certification Part One & Part Two)?

No you do not. These legacy programs are acceptable however exam questions are based on material in the current certification program created March 1, 2016.

24. I took my JHSC Certification Part Two in an area other than construction (mining, aggregates, transportation, etc.). Will it be accepted?

No, you need to take sector-specific JHSC Certification Part Two: Construction.

25. My courses were previously approved for the CHSO program as equivalent. Why are they no longer approved?

As part of the overall effort to create a nationally recognized program, the equivalencies for the NCSO program are generally more stringent than what was previously acceptable under the CHSO program.

26. I am currently not a member of IHSA, but I am working in the construction industry. Can I receive training at a member rate?

Consideration will be sent to Management.

27. I want to make sure my application will pass the approval stage. Will you look at it before I pay the application fee?

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No. IHSA staff will not review any applications until the fee is paid. There will be no review of applications prior to this. Please refer to IHSA's application submission checklist prior to submission.

28. What is the passing requirement on the exam?

Participants must achieve a score of 75 per cent in order to pass the exams.

29. One of the required courses is Defensive Driving General. Can I just show my current G-class licence that I drive with daily?

Simply showing your current G-class licence is not acceptable. You must complete the **Defensive Driving General** course or provide appropriate proof of an equivalent program.

30. I have many years of driving experience. Why should I take a defensive driving course?

Driving-related hazards are a leading cause of fatalities and injuries in the construction sector. IHSA believes that this is an important component of the NCSO program. Continuing education in order to improve skills and eliminate bad habits is the cornerstone of IHSA's training philosophy. IHSA believes that everyone can benefit from additional driver training, regardless of their experience level. That is why this course is now a requirement of the NCSO program.

31. Do the courses for the NCSO have to be completed in any specific order?

Some courses must be taken in a specific order to meet pre-requisite requirements. Please review IHSA's course descriptions for additional information.

32. I am a Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP). Does this exempt me from any of your criteria?

No. While the CRSP is a health and safety designation, the NCSO is intended to demonstrate specific health and safety knowledge and experience in the construction industry.

33. What can I do to prepare for the exam? Is a study guide available?

Yes a study guide is available. Visit the NCSO webpage to download the [study guide](#).

34. Does that mean the training I have previously taken under my CHSO application won't be recognized on my NCSO application?

Not at all! Provided it meets the NCSO requirements and timelines that are outlined in the application guide, prior courses that are not expired should count toward your NCSO application. It is important to note that there are additional courses included in NCSO that were not previously in CHSO requirements and some courses have a renewal requirement.

35. I have sent my application in to IHSA. How long should I expect to wait before I get notified of the status of my application?

IHSA is experiencing a high volume of applications and we are trying our best to process them as quickly as possible within 10 business days of receipt of arrival. Your application must be absolutely complete, containing all supporting documentation including

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- Application form
- Proof of training including your transcript or certificates of completion for **all** courses
- Signed code of ethics.

If you are missing information, this will delay the processing and approval of your application and subsequently, the scheduling of exams. For a copy of your IHSA training transcript please review and submit this online form: https://ihsa.formstack.com/forms/ihsa_request_form_certificate_reprint

36. How quickly after I successfully complete the exams, will I receive notification of my successful NCSO status?

We anticipate your results and your certificate of successful completion will be processed within two weeks from the exam date.

37. The IHSA.ca website states that the NCSO certificate is valid for three years and then will require additional training to maintain it. What other training will I require?

Part of the NCSO certificate involves a comprehensive maintenance program. This is intended to demonstrate that the NCSO is not only qualified but also maintains a continuous cycle of professional development. The maintenance program consists of two components:

- Renewal of the required certifications that have an expiration date.
- Completion of ongoing Professional Development courses.

The ongoing professional development must be demonstrated as beyond the required courses. A total of 18 class hours must be completed (any number of courses can be taken as long as the time completed amounts to 18 hours) and must be taken within three years of receiving the NCSO certificate or last renewal.

These courses must be in line with the competencies set out by the other courses in the NCSO certificate or must enhance the NCSO's working skills. There is no set list of what courses must be completed.