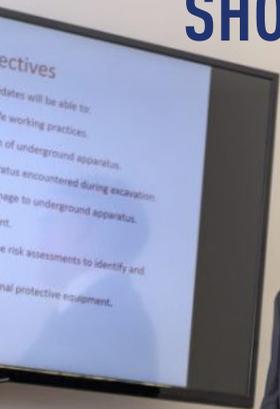




CERTIFICATIONS AND TRAINING A RESTORATION FIRM SHOULD HAVE



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Introduction

Certifications, licensures, permits and qualifications requirements are vast and often confusing for restoration and disaster recovery contractors. There is a lot of information and training available for different sectors, and the required credentials vary state-to-state, city-to-city and business-to-business. To help simplify the information, this paper will break down the basic structure of full-service restoration companies and help navigate the typical ins and outs of which training and specialty certifications are required. We will focus on what a company should look for in their restoration firm as a whole in terms of licensure, certifications, and company experience.



State and Local Requirements

HOW TO SEE IF YOUR RESTORATION FIRM IS PROPERLY LICENSED

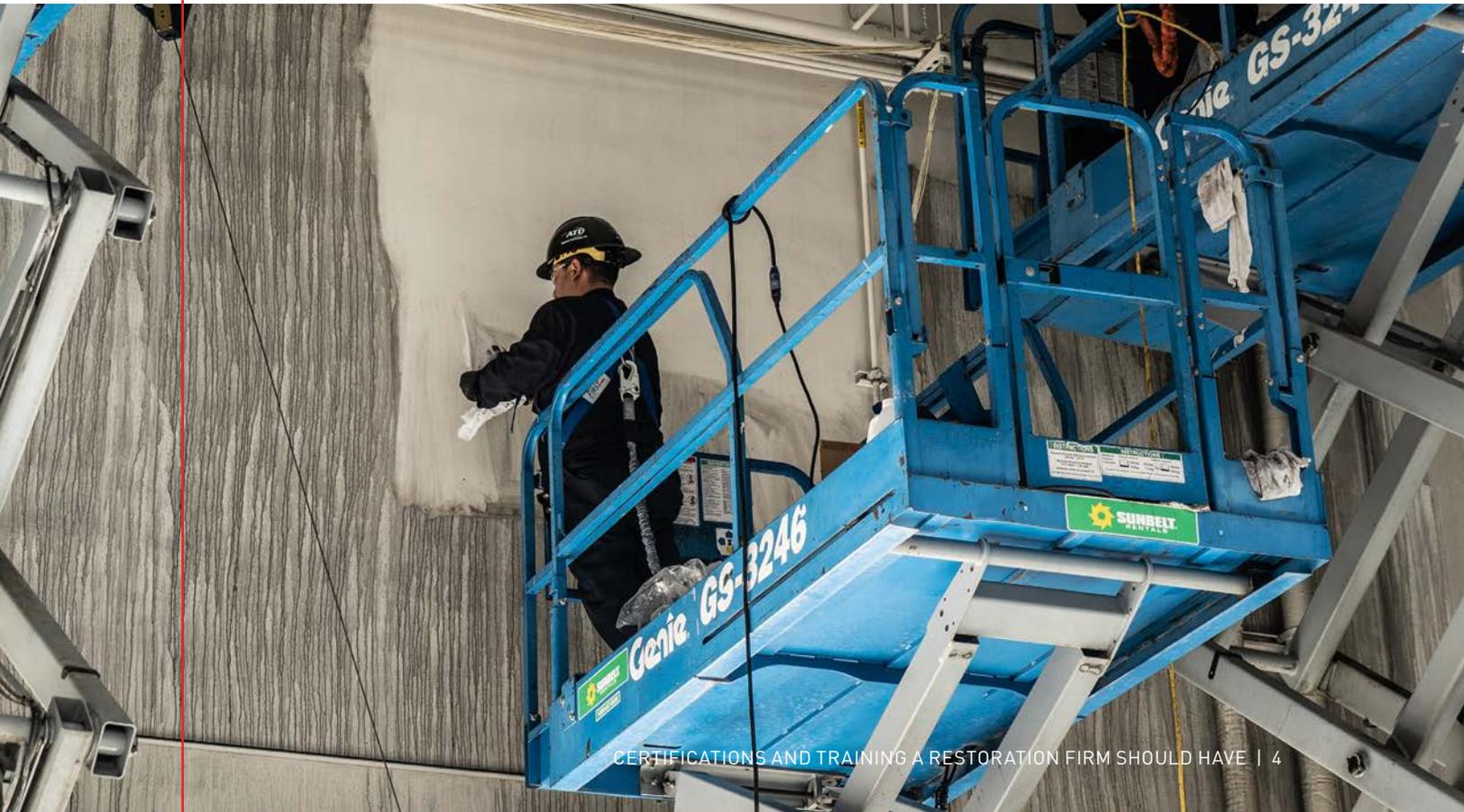
Hiring the most qualified restoration firm comes with a lot of benefits but also a lot of legwork. For restoration and disaster recovery companies, potential clients should ask about their contractor's license and various environmental certifications as they are required by the state.

CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CERTIFICATIONS AND LICENSES ARE THE TWO MOST COMMON AND BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

The county clerk for your building's location should have records of any properly licensed firm's county-required certifications and can help point you in the right direction for further research.

CERTIFICATIONS NOT REQUIRED BUT RECOMMENDED

Depending on your building's location and potential risks and/or the kind of restoration your building needs, there could be a lot of firms in your area with the proper baseline certifications. Look for the firms that have chosen to go above and beyond to get a wider range of certifications and training. This can be a good indication of the quality of the work they will do and the people they will have doing it. The most popular sources for certifications in the restoration industry are the Institute of Inspection Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) and the Restoration Industry Association (RIA). The scope and training provided by both the IICRC and RIA have made them leading industry standards; many resources on "Hiring a Restoration Crew" suggest asking the firm if they are IICRC- or RIA-certified. A certified firm must demonstrate proof of insurance, maintain a written customer complaint policy with follow-up on complaints and provide education and training, leading to certification, for technicians.



CONTRACTOR LICENSE

Each region of the country experiences disasters typical for their area and subsequent damages. Each type of natural disaster comes from a specific sector of remediation and reconstruction, each requiring its own specialty license. One consideration is your location and the evolving landscape of common disasters. While companies in the Northeast may not have solely focused on fire restoration, the wildfires in 2020 have shifted companies to expand their practice into this field. The weather conditions in the Southeast could be more likely to promote mold remediation work, given the general humidity and hurricane season. The restoration crews handling flooding and water damage are required to possess different certifications for those handling fire and smoke damage. Know your region's common disasters.

Knowing state-by-state contractor license requirements is vitally important. Companies could face fines, removal of the project, and/or business closures without the proper credentials. In some situations, contractors can also face jail time and have no legal recourse if the client refuses to pay. For property owners, hiring untrained, unlicensed contractors can also lead to dangerous consequences as the work may not be performed correctly, leading to further costs, damages and dangers.

WHAT IS WHAT?



CERTIFICATION

Certification is an official document to prove a company/contractor has attained a certain level of knowledge or achievement that qualifies them for their line of work. Certification also assures clients that your technicians are highly trained experts. Depending on the state/city, it can be obtained in place of, or in addition to, a license.



LICENSING

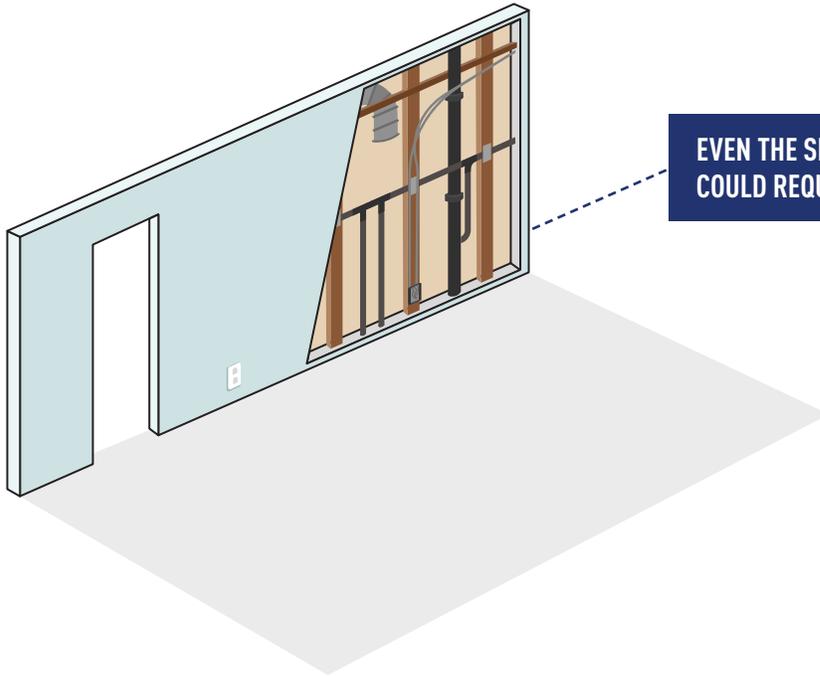
At its core, licensing is as it sounds: proof that the company is licensed to perform the work within that profession. It is a legal designation with a clear set of vocational requirements and involves passing exams and meeting certain criteria to prove reasonable competency in a specific trade. As stated previously, some local legislations obligate a certification alongside a license (certification to prove training has been completed and a license to legally practice work in a specific field).



REGISTRATION

This is a written record of who is performing the work provided. While this doesn't guarantee expertise or certified competency, some states and cities require these separate registration requirements to be considered legitimate in the eyes of local business laws.

For the restoration industry, companies/individuals start with a basic licensing of either “general contractor” or “subcontractor.” You need a general contractor if your project requires more than one trade (e.g., a flood may require flooring, subflooring, drywall, and other trades, whereas a small stain may only require a flooring sub). Most often, clients with disaster damage will seek a restoration company with their general contractor’s license. A general contractor’s license is required in many states for anyone taking the prime contract on any construction project.



**EVEN THE SMALLEST DAMAGED AREAS OF A BUILDING
COULD REQUIRE MULTIPLE TRADES FOR REPAIR**

As these stipulations vary, a local county clerk would be able to provide the state and regional-specific documents for particular licenses and certifications. Below are also a few resources with links to help navigate the different, state-by-state contractor requirements:

<https://www.nascla.org/page/LicensingInfo>

<https://www.homeadvisor.com/r/state-by-state-licensing-requirements/>

DO YOU HAVE TO HAVE A PERSON AFFILIATED WITH ANY LICENSURE?

Different states require different types of licenses to fulfill legal requirements of safety and best practices. Does the restoration firm you’ve hired have someone affiliated with all the correct licenses for your project’s needs? If a person is affiliated with a license, ask for that person’s resume to verify their experience. Some states require a person to be attached to the license and some require the company as a whole to be attached.

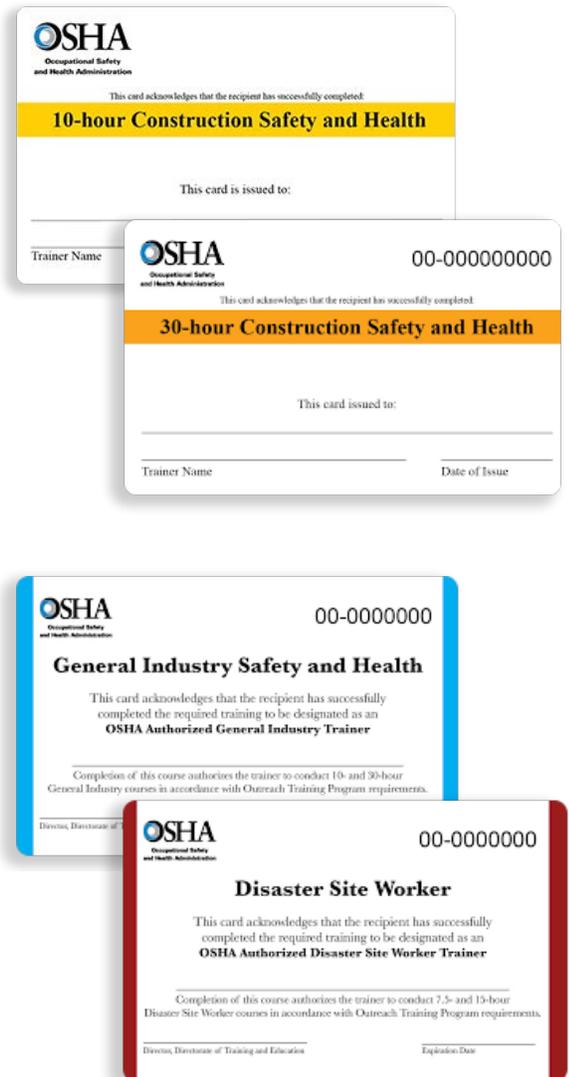
Safety

WHAT IS THE INDUSTRY STANDARD FOR SAFETY TRAINING?

Safety training is a vital part of many places of employment, especially in the construction industry. Many workers contact OSHA trainers or training companies to determine which course would be most relevant to their needs. Unfortunately, this is a question best answered by the employers. Employers have a legal responsibility to provide a workplace free from hazards, so it is imperative that both employers and employees work together to evaluate the work environment and identify what sort of training is necessary.

All restoration workers, from remediation to administration, can benefit from OSHA safety training. Many employers use 10-hour or 30-hour OSHA training as a baseline introduction to workplace safety hazards and workers' rights under OSHA laws and guidelines. When it comes to OSHA, the best baseline company-wide safety training requirements for a construction company include:

- **10-hour OSHA card:** The 10-hour course is intended for entry-level workers. It provides information about worker rights, employer responsibilities, and how to file a complaint. It also outlines basic awareness training on the recognition, avoidance, abatement, and prevention of workplace hazards.
- **30-hour OSHA card:** The 30-hour course is intended for supervisors or for workers with some level of safety responsibility. It provides a greater depth and variety of training on an expanded list of topics associated with workplace hazards than the 10-hour course.
- **OSHA Trainer card:** This signifies the authority to teach 10- and 30-hour outreach courses and distribute OSHA student completion cards. In this course, individuals become authorized by meeting training and industry safety experience requirements. In order to provide flexibility, trainers are allowed to tailor the 10- and 30-hour training topics to meet the needs of their audience. OSHA specifies mandatory topics along with flexible topic requirements for each industry. The OSHA #500 course, specifically, is tailored toward Occupational Safety and Health Standards for the Construction Industry. Trainer courses are offered by the OSHA Training Institute (OTI) Education Centers, and must be updated every four years.
- **Disaster Site Worker card:** These courses, either 7.5- or 15-hour, are intended to provide Disaster Site Workers with awareness of the safety and health hazards they may encounter in the field. The importance of respiratory and other personal protective equipment and proper decontamination procedures that may be used to mitigate the hazards are also covered. For restoration crews, in particular, this card is beneficial.



BASIC ALL-COMPANY TRAINING (FIRST AID, OSHA 10)

It may seem obvious, but checking on the details of the training a firm requires for all on-site employees should be part of any routine research before hiring. Ensuring a firm requires first aid/CPR/AED training and OSHA-10 training can make a world of difference in the safety of your restoration project and in the safety of the crew you'll have on-site. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

COMPANY SAFETY LAWS (OSHA)

Being OSHA compliant is the least any company can do to ensure that their business and all projects they are hired to complete are completed with safety in mind. Familiarize yourself with what OSHA requires and be sure any company you work with has a solid track record of full compliance and proper safety protocols.

EMR RATING

All contractors have what is known as an Experience Modification Rating (EMR) rating. With 1 being the industry average, recommended ratings should be under 1. An EMR rating is determined by a company's safety recordables (accidents) and their general safety history. It is updated every year to reflect any improvements or infractions from the previous year.



Final Checklist

See below checklists to help guide you through the process of selecting a restoration company. Thorough due diligence may take a little extra time, but the homework can save you time, money and frustration. You should use \$100k as the benchmark when defining large or small.

I've experienced a disaster and need to hire a restoration firm.

First, get three estimates. It's important you have three companies inspect your property and give you an estimate to get a general benchmark. Once you have inspections and estimates, ask questions. Note, large losses will be treated differently than a small loss. Though both require due diligence, it is important you mention the size of your project when asking for references.

Ask about experience:

Has the company completed similar work? If the scope is costly, ask for three references. Ask for an estimate and for the firm's typical accuracy in their estimates. Final costs should come within 5% of their estimate.

Ask about insurance:

Verify your insurance with the company's estimate. Get down to details. What is covered and what is not? Is the company insured? What is their policy? Does it feel adequate considering the size of your estimated work?

Confirm state licensure requirements:

Check with the county clerk of your building's location for county-required certifications, and direction for further research. Often, their website will give you a great outline of what is required. Does the company have their business license and contractor's license for the state? Note that some states do not require a contractor's license, so verify what is required in your state.

Verify safety program:

Ask your potential contractors for their EMR rating. It should be under 1. The closer to zero, the better.

I own a building and would like to have a restoration firm on-call should I experience any sort of disaster.

Companies often put out an RFP to restoration firms. This is one of the best methods for collecting information on firms and comparing their capabilities side by side. When crafting an RFP, add the questions below.

Ask about experience:

Does the company have similar properties on-call? Ask for three references from similar properties who have had to call for service. When calling the properties, verify they are in a similar region, are of the same size and are about the same age. Ask for an estimate and for the firm's typical accuracy in their estimates. Final costs should come within 5% of their estimate.

Ask about insurance:

Verify your insurance with the company's estimate. Get down to details. What is covered and what is not? Is the company insured? What is their policy? Does it feel adequate considering the size of your building?

Confirm state licensure requirements:

Check with the county clerk of your building's location for county-required certifications, and direction for further research. Often, their website will give you a great outline of what is required. Check especially for contractor's license requirements and environmental certification requirements. Does the company have their business license and contractor's license for the state? Note that some states do not require a contractor's license, so verify what is required in your state.

Verify safety program:

Ask your potential contractors for their EMR rating. It should be under 1. The closer to zero, the better.



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