



Healthcare Credentials are Entrée to Growing Market Segment

By Stephen A. Moeller, Project Manager, Krusinski Construction Company

It is widely acknowledged that getting ahead in the construction industry requires keeping up with the latest technology and trends through workshops, seminars, and continuing education courses. In a down economy, the classroom also can keep you employed.



At this writing, most segments of the U.S. construction industry have slowed up with one noticeable exception – healthcare. Across the country, hospitals have been on a rapid growth trajectory. Non-federal construction spending rose 102 percent between 2000 and

2007 to almost \$30 billion. And, for the past three years, more than 14 million square feet of medical office space were built annually – a huge jump from the 8.5 million square feet that were constructed each of the previous four years.

The biggest reason for this demand is our aging population. Some 77 million baby boomers will reach the age of 65 in the year 2011. By 2020, that total is expected to reach 98 million. This is by far the largest demographic segment by age in our marketplace at this time. As boomers age, they need increased medical services not only to fight illness but also to promote wellness.

Recognizing the potential of this industry segment, my employer, Krusinski Construction Company of Oak Brook, Illinois, sent two superintendents and myself back to school.

All three of us enrolled in the Healthcare Construction Certification Program, offered by the American Society for Healthcare Engineering. This involves an e-learning self-study program that takes about two to three hours to complete as well as a two-day seminar on healthcare construction, covering the latest compliance issues as well as the expectations of owners, staff and patients.

The course is recommended for healthcare facility managers, construction project managers, general contractors, sub-contractors, architects and design engineers, owners' representatives, and infection control professionals. It is the basic credential needed to participate in the healthcare construction industry on an every level. Topics include:

- The healthcare planning, design and construction process
- Construction risk assessment
- Infection control
- Team building
- Technology
- Mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems
- Life safety
- Medical gas systems
- Owner expectations of designers and contractors



Building a healthcare facility is different than building an office or industrial building. In addition to routine construction issues, you need to know, for example, how to control airborne contaminants and how to handle medical gases like oxygen and nitrogen. Other

considerations are tied to the fact that a healthcare facility must accommodate sick and incapacitated patients.

For example, drilling a floor opening in an existing building to get a 1/4-in conduit pipe down to the floor below is a simple task in most structures. Not so in a hospital. You have to know what type of medical treatment is below the drilling, to the side of it and in surrounding areas.

If a surgical room is below, the drill vibration would not only disturb the surgeons and staff but could impact the instruments and endanger patients. If the room below is positively pressurized, the hole would create an upward draft, spreading any airborne contaminants in that room to another floor.

We recently encountered a situation in a medical office building. We were building out a suite of doctors' offices on the second floor and had to tie the new plumbing pipe work to existing rough-ins located on the first floor, which was



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occupied by an immediate care facility. The difficulty was doing so without interrupting patient care.

Communication was very important. We notified the clinic several days in advance and scheduled the work in the evening so it wouldn't disturb patients or doctors. Then we brought in special exhaust fans and put down plastic barriers to prevent dust and other particulates from contaminating sterile areas and instruments.

With healthcare construction expected to continue growing for at least the next 10 years, certification in this field is an important credential for anyone who wants to take advantage

of the opportunities and protect himself against downturns in other areas of construction. This training is needed in the marketplace today. General contractors and sub-contractors can not get on bidder lists for many healthcare jobs without an ASHE-certified management team.

Krusinski Construction Company, which has a growing client base in the healthcare industry and sees the growth potential, is sending two more project managers to the ASHE certification program this fall.

For information about healthcare construction training, visit the American Society for Healthcare Engineering website.

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