

Becoming a Certified Protection Professional

Contributed by the editors of *AIArchitect*

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SUMMARY

There are many benefits of becoming a certified protection professional. Some of them are presented here.

ANOTHER EXAM?

Security officials recognize and respect the Certified Protection Professional (CPP) designation conferred by the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS), yet few architects have completed the certification process. One reason clients admire it and so few architects have earned it: It's a tough exam.

EARNING NEW STRIPES

Although "not quite as brutal as taking the Architect Registration Exam," getting the certification was a "trial of fire," said Randy Atlas, PhD, AIA, CPP, a principal of Atlas Safety and Security Design in Miami.

"The CPP is sort of like taking the master's level of comprehensive examination. It is a very broad-based examination of knowledge and skills, including due process, premise of liability, and other legal issues in areas from nuclear security to restaurant and hospitality security," Atlas explained. "It's very comprehensive and time-consuming."

OPENING DOORS TO NEW CLIENTS

Is it worth the time needed to study for such a challenging exam?

"In about two hours I am meeting with the security director from Miami-Dade Community College," Atlas said in an interview. "Here is a man running security for a fairly large community college, and one of the first things he noted when we first met was the fact that I was a CPP. The dean, administrator, and other executives in the room had no idea what that was. But that security chief knew right away we could talk seriously about his business. He goes to the ASIS conferences and reads his Security Management magazine. He knows that someone with the CPP credentials is on the 'A' list."

GETTING STARTED

Atlas recommends ASIS membership for any architect interested in security design. The society (which long ago outgrew its name "industrial security") offers study courses for taking the certification exam, a magazine to keep up with latest developments, and plenty of opportunities to network with knowledgeable people.

STANDING OUT IN THE CROWD

"I'm the token architect on the ASIS Security Architecture and Engineering Committee, along with a pool of engineers," said Atlas, who has also been a member of the AIA Committee on Architecture for Justice for almost 25 years.

With a lifelong interest in justice-facilities architecture (his uncle was Miami Beach chief of police), an architecture degree from the University of Illinois (where he also worked for the National Clearinghouse for Criminal Justice Planning and Architecture), a PhD in criminology, and a quarter century of experience in the field, Atlas has quite a head start on most architects. And he encourages others to join him.

"My quest for the last 25 years has been to teach architects how to ask about security issues and teach security officials how to ask for good architecture; to think in terms of performance rather than prescriptive programmatic specifications," he said. "From the beginning of my career I have worked to straddle the worlds of architecture and criminal justice. And it's true that credentials are the quickest way to get beyond the first impression criticisms: 'Oh he's just an architect, what does he know?' or 'He's just a security consultant, what does he know about architecture?'"

RESOURCES

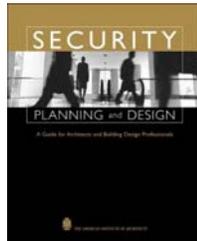
More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 11.10.01 Understanding Human Behavior Leads to Safe Environments
- 11.10.02 Specifying Building Products for Building Security
- 11.10.03 Building Security from a Client Point of View

For More Information on This Topic

See *Security Planning and Design: A Guide for Architects and Building Design Professionals*, by the American Institute of Architects. *Security Planning and Design* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending e-mail to bookstore@aia.org



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Keywords

- Building performance
- Security
- Security barriers
- Special security construction