You can now add Suffolk County to the growing list of legal entities requiring the licensing of pool and spa professionals. Currently, Nassau County and the State of Connecticut require licensing as well. Some other counties in New York are looking to follow the lead of the two Long Island counties. The states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania are looking closely at what is happening in Connecticut. I think it is safe to say that pool industry licensing is finally coming of age in the NESPA region.

I realize that many industry people are against licensing; however, I think it is a good and positive thing for the industry. Among other benefits, it will help you to grow your business and it will enhance your credentials in the eyes of your customers and prospects.

The complaint I hear when I talk about licensing is "Why pick on us legitimate guys in the business? Go after the unlicensed, unqualified people." Well, that is exactly what our licensing initiative is doing. Just because a person is able to attain a "home improvement" license and has been "doing this forever," does not mean he or she is up to speed on current codes and practices.

Consider these benefits from licensing:
- In a licensed environment, other companies that bid jobs against you must have achieved a proven level of competence. Isn't that only fair to the people who have taken the time and made the effort to be up-to-date on codes and have chosen to practice their craft in the most professional way possible? Isn't it also what we owe our customers, who deserve the very best pool and spa for their money? Do you want to watch as somebody else gets the job you should have had because he low-balled the price simply because he didn't really know the proper way to bid and complete the job?
- Although you may think, "Serves them right" when the job goes south, it is never a good thing for our industry to be seen in a bad light. Nor do you want to be the next one through that door, because the customer will be looking to take out his frustration on somebody!
- Licensing ensures continuing education and learning for everyone. Those in the business who think they know everything because they have done this work since they were born will be forced to continue their education and to learn new methods and better ways of doing things. Our customers and our industry end up the winners.
- Licensing provides a platform for you to establish yourself as a licensed professional while highlighting your certifications. Along with knowing I am licensed in Nassau and Suffolk counties, I want my prospects and customers to know that I also hold the CPO (Certified Pool Operator), CSP (Certified Service Professional) and CBP (Certified Building Professional) certifications.
- Licensing provides a level of comfort to our customers; they know they are working with an individual who has been certified by his or her chosen industry.

Perhaps your argument against licensing is the cost factor. My counter is that when everyone has to get licensed, it becomes part of the overhead line in all of their pricing schedules. Licensing is a win-win-win for you, for the industry and for the pool consumer. Embrace certifications and licensing; use them to your advantage rather than trying to avoid them. And always remember that NESPA and APSP are here to help in every way possible. All you have to do is inquire!

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