NATIONAL COMPETENCY-ASSURANCE ARCHITECTURE

Three-Tier Heavy Equipment Operator Competency-Assurance Framework

Three distinct decisions protect credibility: develop capability, independently verify competence, and authorize the actual work.

TIER 1
Training and development



PURPOSE

Build foundational knowledge and practical capability.

Formal instruction, hazard recognition, equipment fundamentals, and supervised practice develop the operator before an independent certification decision.

DECISION QUESTION

Is the operator ready for independent assessment?

Primary accountability: training provider and developmental employer program

TIER 2
Independent certification



PURPOSE

Verify standardized knowledge and practical competence.

Written and practical assessment, common scoring rules, impartial decision authority, and safety-critical failure gates support a credible and portable national credential.

DECISION QUESTION

Has the operator met the national certification standard?

Primary accountability: recognized, independent certification body

TIER 3
Employer task authorization



PURPOSE

Authorize the operator for the actual machine and task.

Jobsite verification considers machine class, configuration, attachments, ground conditions, operational aids, blind spots, and the assignment. Reassess when operating conditions or performance signals change.

DECISION QUESTION

Can this operator perform this specific work under current conditions?

Primary accountability: employer and accountable operational leader

Training develops. Certification verifies. The employer authorizes the work.