

cheap  
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# The Cost of Being Cheap

**Petroleum contracting is an area where you simply can't afford to skimp on costs**

There is a sign on our company lunchroom wall that reads, "cheap work isn't good and good work isn't cheap". It was there when I first arrived and by the look of its worn features--it may have been there for 50 years. In this day of high tech, I'm amazed that we still have to extol the benefits of hiring the right technician to do fuel equipment-related work.



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The North American fuel equipment service and installation industry has traditionally been made up of small businesses. The only formal technical training for this unrecognized trade was provided, at the expense of the businesses, by manufacturers at their convenience. The apprenticeship process if you could call it that during that period was long and disorganized. New recruits were hard to find and came mostly from families already in the business or the offspring of owners. Techni-

cian trainees usually chose installation or service as a focus.

Over the last several years several industry changes have occurred in Canada and for some very good reasons. In order to attract bright young tradesmen to the industry we needed to have the trade recognized by the provincial government. To accomplish this we had to develop a training program that met certain provincial trade training protocol. In British Columbia this took four years, hundreds of hours by subject matter experts and hundreds of thousands of dollars for consultants. The petroleum fuel system installer and petroleum fuel system service technician finally have achieved trade status in British Columbia.

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The British Columbia Petroleum Contractors Association was founded through this route to promote and engage the industry in the province.

Other provincial petroleum contractor associations have accomplished the same thing for the same reasons. The training programs, in addition to teaching relevant technical skills, teach safety, tool



use, testing processes and technological improvements. Most provincial trade associations are also members of the Canadian Petroleum Contractors Association (CPCA) and membership indicates that these businesses in all provinces have engaged in – or have access to – a training and certification program. You should not hire contractors that do not have technicians who are trained or certified through these programs. It shouldn't be necessary here to itemize the health and safety, as well as environmental risks associated

with the maintenance and installation of fuel systems. This is not to say that there aren't experienced and qualified technicians that are not members of provincial associations. The accreditation process is still developing and receiving acceptance.

Going cheap on service or installation costs is not a wise decision. Contractors that work for low hourly rates could be employing low paid and inexperienced staff or they could be compromising safety (techs not wearing proper PPE is a dead giveaway). Both conditions could put

you and your business in danger. Petroleum fuel has both an environmental and combustion risk and insurance claims for either can be huge. Having good liability and environmental insurance coverage is one way to find protection but the better way is to not compromise on the skill level of the technicians working for your contractor. Inexperienced and poor-

ly trained technicians are slower and in the long run cost more anyway.

My father always told me: "if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right".

Before engaging a fuel equipment service or installation contractor, check their credentials. Membership in one of many provincial petroleum contractor associations is a good sign and these associations have a list of members.

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