

## IRMI Announces New Designation

As part of NASBP's outreach efforts to other organizations and our continued emphasis on education and professional development, we are excited about the Construction Risk and Insurance Specialist (CRIS™) designation and CE program developed by IRMI (*International Risk Management Institute*). This new innovative CE program is available on-line and is designed to improve personal and professional development. Recently, the Pipeline visited with IRMI President Jack Gibson, CPCU, CRIS, ARM about the CRIS program.

### **Pipeline:** How did the idea for CRIS begin?

**Jack Gibson (JG):** The concept was first discussed 20 years ago as an extension of our book, *Construction Risk Management*. We decided not to pursue it because the cost of delivery and testing on a national basis was prohibitive. But now, with the Internet and our strong relationship with WebCE, those costs have come way down. We decided to go for it in the spring of 2004 and launched CRIS on March 15, 2005.

### **Pipeline:** What was the process for putting the program together?

**JG:** We had a strong foundation to begin with, consisting of our construction insurance and risk management background, plus the *Construction Risk Management* manual and various construction risk and insurance books we publish. But really the backbone of this program, and for most of what we do here, lies in our Research Analysts. Each of the CRIS courses was assigned to a Research Analyst with expertise in that area. They were responsible for developing the curriculum and the testing, which took about a year.

### **Pipeline:** What is the main purpose of the CRIS program?

**JG:** We wanted to prepare a curriculum that provides the core competencies and knowledge for construction risk and insurance. We felt it was important for this to work both ways. In other words, the agent or broker needs a good understanding of the basic, yet unique needs of the construction contractor. And the contractor needs to have a degree of comfort with the agent or broker's knowledge.

### **Pipeline:** Who did you have in mind when you were developing CRIS?

**JG:** Primarily the insurance agents and brokers that focus on construction insurance. Also, contractors with the responsibility of purchasing insurance or managing risk programs. But I really believe there are others who can benefit too. Anyone involved in construction risk but not necessarily insurance sales, such as underwriters or finance professionals, can broaden their expertise and career. It's a great way for surety bond producers to expand their education. And safety professionals at construction companies who see risk management as a career path enhancement.

### **Pipeline:** Why is CRIS important to an individual?

**JG:** Understanding that contractors' needs are unique is critical. CRIS will help anyone better understand construction risk and insurance, and that leads to making better business decisions. Any newcomer—underwriter, agent, broker—acting as an industry generalist that is not focused on construction will benefit. Bond producers who wish to broaden their insurance knowledge base should find the program invaluable.



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Plus, the experienced construction insurance professional will gain some new knowledge and increase their confidence. Perhaps the best part is that in addition to learning a core competency you can satisfy mandatory state continuing education requirements, and earn a designation to boot. The designation proves one's dedication and commitment to the industry and really leverages the small investment involved.

### **Pipeline: What impact will CRIS have on the industry?**

**JG:** Our desire is that CRIS will elevate and testify to the core competencies earned. Best practices will also be documented and developed. I think it could have a very beneficial impact on the industry, by increasing the professionalism of those providing services, purchasing insurance, and administering risk management. We've seen both a need and demand there.

It's also important to note we intentionally priced CRIS low so many people could participate. We'd love to have thousands of designees; tens of thousands would be great.

### **Pipeline: Is the curriculum tough and how does it compare with CPCU and ARM?**

**JG:** It's an easier program to complete than what I call the professional designations like CPCU and associate designations such as ARM. Our philosophy is that CRIS is a specialty designation—a testament to core competencies in construction risk and insurance, and dedication to our industry. The entire CRIS program covers about the same volume of course material as a single CPCU or ARM course. CRIS is also strictly multiple-choice with no essay questions. Plus, CRIS can be completed at home online compared to the need to travel to a testing center for the others.

Bottom line frankly, is that CPCU and ARM are more prestigious. Each CPCU and ARM course is the equivalent of a semester college course, with the test covering hundreds of pages of course material. The optimal goal for a risk professional would be to have a CPCU or ARM and a CRIS designation.

However, the CRIS program should be very useful to those who simply don't have the time to complete the CPCU, ARM or other programs.

### **Pipeline: What does the near future hold for CRIS?**

**JG:** The CRIS program is not a one time thing – there is an ongoing continuing education component. Thus, continuous development of additional CE courses is a priority. This will make it easy for CRIS designees to satisfy their state CE requirements and maintain their designation with fresh, interesting, and low cost online CE courses, or optionally, by attending certain pre-approved seminars and conferences.

### **Pipeline: Thank you Jack for your time and for creating a tool to help our industry. NASBP supports you and hopes many bond producers will take advantage of CRIS.**



For more information on CRIS, please visit [www.CRIS-CE.com](http://www.CRIS-CE.com).

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