

IRATA vs SPRAT

The Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA) and the Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians (SPRAT) are both organizations that seek to promote safety and develop standards for rope access. Extensive information can be found on their websites. The table below is a summary of some key points of comparison that may help understand what these organizations do and how they differ.

Both IRATA and SPRAT were formed to address the needs of companies that were already engaged in rope access work, before relevant regulations and standards existed. IRATA led the way and SPRAT modeled their organization on what IRATA had already created successfully for the UK and Europe.

However, there are some key differences at the level of membership and certification that are worth noting:

- IRATA membership is exclusive to rope access companies that undergo an application and audit procedure. This means that IRATA operations and training are offered only by member companies whose program is regularly audited and reviewed to assure quality. SPRAT does not assure the quality of their member companies.
- IRATA requires 4 days minimum training prior to assessment, as part of the certification process. Within the SPRAT scheme, training prior to certification is recommended, not required.
- The upgrade requirements for IRATA are currently double what SPRAT requires. Since the experience hours logged must meet certain requirements, the road to an IRATA upgrade is significantly longer. This is bad news for someone looking to fast track the process. However, the higher requirement means that IRATA technicians gain more experience before becoming responsible for the overall safety of a rope access site, which is a comfort to all concerned.

For technicians trying to choose which certification to pursue, the choice between SPRAT or IRATA certification may depend on the specific employer, industry, or geographical region in which you intend to work. If that is somewhat difficult to nail down, then dual, SPRAT-IRATA Level 1 certification is a good bet.

For companies that are interested in contracting rope access services or training, the considerations will include location, cost, availability, and industry expertise. The quality

assurance and safety reporting required by IRATA companies may also be a determining factor. It is important to note that there are other ways to verify the safety and quality assurance programs of a company, but the IRATA audit is specific to rope access programs.

	Industrial Rope Access Trade Association (IRATA)	Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians (SPRAT)
Website	Irata.org	sprat.org
Main Office	United Kingdom	United States
Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formed in the late 1980s, to solve maintenance challenges in the offshore oil and gas industry. Its formation was the result of an initiative of leading companies who had begun to use industrial rope access techniques to provide a safe working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in the mid-1990s to address the needs of a growing number of companies and operators employing rope access techniques in North America.
Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue in the responsible position as the leading worldwide organization for rope access. To promote and maintain high standards, safety, work quality, and working practices for the industrial rope access industry. Dedication to improving best practice of individuals working in rope access. To promote continuous improvement in the education and training aspects of rope access. To increase awareness of the advantages of rope access over alternative access methods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To advance the safe use of rope access through education, standards development, and administering certifications.

Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted to rope access companies, subject to regular audits. • Over 400 member companies around the world. • More than 100,000 rope access technicians worldwide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to all companies and individuals, not subject to audit. • Over 380 active voting members. • 7500 – 8000 active, certified technicians.
Quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited member companies. • Independent assessment. • Published safe practices and guidelines for work, training, and certification. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent evaluation at Level 2 and Level 3. • Published safe practices and guidelines for work, training, and certification.
Safety Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly safety statistics reported by members and compiled into industry reports. 	
Certification Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three levels of technician competency. • Four days of training required by an IRATA training member company. • One-day assessment by an independent IRATA Assessor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three levels of technician competency. • No training requirement prior to evaluation, training is recommended. • One-day evaluation by a SPRAT Evaluator .who does not need to be independent at Level 1.

Upgrade requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One year and 1000 hours minimum experience required at current level.• Four days of training required by an IRATA training member company.• One-day assessment by an independent IRATA Assessor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Six months and 500 hours experience required at current level.• No training requirement, training is recommended.• One-day evaluation by a SPRAT Evaluator who must be independent at Level 2 and Level 3.
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