

## Twin Falls Times News, Thursday, May 6, 2010 – by Joshua Palmer

### **New pharmacy regulations require new certification**

Idaho has started enforcing a new law requiring all pharmacy technicians to be state certified - a response to national pharmacy chains relying on more technicians and fewer licensed pharmacists.

The new regulations were created to ensure the safety of consumers and the integrity of the industry, according to a statement by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Board of Pharmacy.

The board says consumers rarely recognize the difference between a licensed pharmacist and pharmacy technicians - largely due to rapid growth in national pharmacy chains that employ several people behind a pharmacy counter. According to the board's website, licensed pharmacists must complete six years of pharmacy school to graduate with a Doctor of Pharmacy degree, while a pharmacy technician is not required to hold a degree.

Federal regulators previously banned pharmacies from having more than three technicians working under the supervision of one certified pharmacist. But in 2009, the cap was lifted after successful lobbying efforts by several chain pharmacies to allow up to six technicians to work under one pharmacist.

Smaller mom-and-pop pharmacies fought against the change, saying it increased sales volume at larger chain stores by using a larger number of lower paid, less experienced pharmacy technicians.

States responded individually by requiring all pharmacy technicians to be certified.

"Idaho is one of the last to require certification," said Kurt Hefner, an instructor at the College of Southern Idaho's Health Sciences and Human Services Department and the owner of Kurt's Pharmacy in Twin Falls.

Federal regulations that went into effect in late 2009 will require all employees who work behind a pharmacy counter to have pharmacy technician training. Current pharmacy employees may continue their present jobs without the training but will be required to obtain the certification if they move to another pharmacy.

CSI will offer a new course starting this fall to certify pharmacy technicians. Allied Health Professor Jill Chestnut said CSI's Pharmacy Technician class will begin Aug. 23.