

PENNSYLVANIA FIRE SERVICE
VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

Hazardous Materials Awareness

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER
PENNSYLVANIA STATE FIRE ACADEMY

Dear Certification Candidate,

Welcome to the Pennsylvania Voluntary Fire Service Certification Program. The purpose of this manual is to provide you with information to successfully participate in certification testing. This manual outlines the pre-requisites, testing and application process, and provides you with a study guide reference list. Tests are conducted under the sanction and approval of the Pennsylvania Office of the State Fire Commissioner with accreditation granted by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (National Pro-Board).

In accordance with *Act 61 of 1995, The State Fire Commissioner Act*, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner is the certifying agency within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy is the administering agency. Any United States Citizen eighteen (18) years of age or older who resides in Pennsylvania may apply for consideration as a test candidate. An exception to the aforementioned would be for certification in hazardous materials awareness. Please refer to the Age Rule Exception under the heading “**Application**

Process”

Good luck and thank you for participating in the Pennsylvania Voluntary Fire Service Certification Program.

Application Process

Upon obtaining an application from either the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC) website or an approved test site, the candidate must fill out the form, in full, and provide all required supporting documentation. The completed application and accompanying documents are to be submitted to an approved test site or PA State Fire Academy (PSFA). The test sites or PSFA will review and either accept or reject the application, based on deficiencies (i.e., lacks pre-requisites, no signatures, etc.).

The general testing process is as follows:

1. A candidate must submit a completed application including all supporting documents;
2. Upon approval of the application, a candidate takes the written and subsequently the skills tests (NOTE: the skills test cannot be taken before the written test);
3. Upon successfully completing the written and skills test and a review of the application for completeness by the test site and PSFA or Delegated Authority, the candidate can be certified for the level tested. If a candidate should not pass any part of the testing process, a retest can be administered and must be completed within one (1) year of the original test date

Age Rule Exception – Hazardous Materials Application:

1. Hazardous Materials Awareness (HazMat Awareness) – Anyone age 14 and older may certify at the HazMat Awareness Level.

The Child Labor Law Division of the Department of Labor & Industry issued the following decision: juniors 14 to 17 years of age are permitted in training and certification at the Hazardous Materials Awareness level; juniors 16 to 17 years of age are permitted to participate in training and certification at the Hazardous Materials Operations level provided **no** Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) atmosphere exist as part of the course or certification testing. *Likewise, this does not permit Junior Firefighters the ability to participate in emergency response to hazardous materials incidents or where the potential for an IDLH atmosphere might exist.*

Application Pointers

1. Make sure application is legible and check for completeness
2. Social Security Number: you have the option to provide the full nine (9) digits or just the last four (4) digits.
3. Complete Name is listed including suffix (Jr, Sr, III, etc) **NO** nicknames please
4. Address includes street, apartment number, city, state and zip

5. All appropriate signatures are obtained and are in blue or black **ink**. Please note that Chief Officers may NOT sign for themselves where a Chief Officer signature is required, another Chief Officer must sign.
6. Copies of required certificates and/or certifications are attached and current copy of both front and back of medical training and CPR cards with signature
7. Make sure your Pre-Requisite Verification Form is appropriately marked off and signed in blue or black **ink**.

Pre-requisites

1. 14 years of age or older
2. Successful completion of an approved Hazardous Materials Awareness Course in accordance with NFPA 472 "Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents". *Certificate must be current within one (1) year of the date of application.* Hazardous Materials Operations or higher course certificates will also be accepted

Testing Policy

Written Test

The written test is randomly generated and consist of forty (40) questions. Candidates will have a maximum of one (1) hour to complete the examination. Passing scores for any written test is seventy percent (70%).

Practical Evaluation

Practical evaluations are intended to measure the manipulative skills which are included in the written examination and designed to measure competence in using the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG).

Re-test Policy

Written Test

If you are unsuccessful you may retest an additional two (2) times and have one (1) year to complete the retest. You will need to contact the fire academy or a test site of your choice to schedule retest.

Skills Test

Skills are assessed within the written test and will follow the guidance of the written retest Policy

Appeals

Within thirty (30) days of receipt of a failure notice, a candidate may request a review of his/her performance records by the State Fire Academy. Appeals must be in writing and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Certification Program.

Accommodations

The Pennsylvania Fire Service Voluntary Certification Program offers reasonable accommodations for the written certification exams for individuals with documented disabilities. Only written requests for accommodations for certification examinations are reviewed and each request is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Requests must be submitted on the "Accommodation Request" form.

The candidate who is requesting an accommodation must complete the request form at the time of application submission or as soon as the need for an accommodation is recognized. All requests must be made prior to the scheduled date of the examination. Any request for accommodation not submitted at least ten (10) working days prior to the scheduled examination will result in a delay in the candidate's date of examination. Please contact the Certification Program Manager for further information.

Recertification

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, certification is a voluntary process; currently there is no requirement for recertification. Issuance of a certificate indicates the candidate has successfully passed the certification test. The certificate issued indicates that the candidate was certified based on the edition and year of the standard under which the candidate certified. Furthermore, issuance of a certification certificate does not imply nor guarantee any indication of future performance as a result of the testing process.

Safety Policy

For the safety and protection of all participants all equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) being used for testing must meet the NFPA standard at the time of manufacturing. PPE will be inspected prior to being used for testing.

The facial hair policy directs that a candidate with facial hair that interferes with the operation or use of a Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) will not be permitted to participate in a testing process that requires the use of a SCBA

Test Results/Release of Results

The Office of the State Fire Commissioner/PA State Fire Academy notifies candidates of their results in writing via US Mail. Only pass/fail grades are given.

In accordance with the Federal Education Records and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 which is a federal law that established a minimum standard for the protection of records requires prior consent of a person before any records or other personally identifiable information can be released. In the event a third party request test results of a candidate a Consent to Release Information form will need to be completed and signed by the candidate that the third party is requesting results for.

No show policy

If a candidate is accepted and fails to show up for testing without an acceptable reason the candidate will be suspended from further certification activities for a time period of one (1) year from the date of the original test.

Study Reference List

Reference list 0109

The following is a list of text that may be reference in preparation for testing:

1. NFPA 472, Standards for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incident, 2008 edition;
2. Delmar, Hazardous Materials Incidents, 2nd Edition;
3. Delmar, Firefighter's Handbook, 2nd Edition;
4. IFSTA, Hazardous Materials for First Responders, 3rd Edition;
5. DOT, Emergency Response Guidebook, 2004 Edition;
6. Jones & Bartlett, Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills, 1st Edition;
7. Jones and Bartlett, Exam Prep Book Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations
<http://www.jbpub.com/fire/ExamPrep/>;
8. Delmar, Exam Preparation Western PA Fireman's Association 724-339-1017

Additional Information:

1. Application should be to the test site at least 2 weeks prior to the test date
2. Please contact the test site of your choice to receive information about fees for testing
3. Photo ID is required at the time of the written and skills testing
4. Dress appropriately

Certification applications and skill sheets as well as a testing schedule and test sites contact information can be found at www.osfc.state.pa.us . Click on the Certification link on the left hand side of the screen. A page will open with information about the certification program and process. At the end of that page you will find several other links for the certification applications, skill sheets, test schedules and test site contact information.

If you have any additional questions or concerns about the testing process please contact the test site coordinator at the site in which you applied to be tested at or the PA State Fire Academy Certification Program Staff.