

PENNSYLVANIA FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS AWARENESS

CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE COMMISSIONER
PENNSYLVANIA STATE FIRE ACADEMY

Dear Certification Candidate,

Welcome to the Pennsylvania Fire Service Voluntary Certification Program. This manual provides information to assist you in successfully participating in the certification test. This manual outlines the prerequisites, testing, and application process and provides 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) and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC)

In accordance with section 7384 of the Emergency Management Services Code (35 Pa. C.S. §§ 7101 *et seq.*), OSFC is entrusted with the duty to implement a statewide firefighter training and certification program. The voluntary certification program in Pennsylvania is available to any Commonwealth resident, regardless of religion, gender, or national origin; any resident may apply for consideration as a test candidate. An exception of the age requirement exists for the hazardous materials awareness level of certification. Refer to the **Age Rule Exception** section (Page 3) for additional information.

Effective March 1, 2026:

- All certification candidates are required to maintain an active Acadis user portal account. (Acadis portal location = OSFC website/ Training and Certification Portal, or click here: [ENVISAGE Acadis®](#))
- All certification candidates are to be registered with the designated test site and rostered for the certification test.
- All certification candidates are to be registered within Acadis for the certification test.
(You will need to register twice for the certification test, with the test site *and* Acadis)

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

Application Process

Obtain an application from either the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC) [website](#) or an approved test site; You must fill out the form, in full, typed, 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). Your application is then reviewed and either accepted or rejected based on compliance and deficiencies (i.e., lacks pre-requisites, no signatures, etc.).

The general test process is as follows:

1. A candidate must submit a complete application including all supporting documents;
2. After the application is approved, the candidate takes the written and subsequently the skills tests (NOTE: the skills test cannot be taken before the written test);
3. Upon successful completion of the written and skills tests 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

Hazardous Materials Awareness (HMA): Anyone age 14 or older may certify at the HMA 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 the application is legible and check for completeness. Applications **MUST** be typed.
2. You **MUST** provide your FEMA Student Identification Number (FEMA-SID)
3. Social Security Number: please provide the last four (4) digits.
4. Make sure you provide your complete name including suffix (Jr, Sr, III, etc.) **NO** nicknames please. (information shall match an official form of identification – i.e. Driver License, Real ID, etc.)
5. Make sure your mailing address includes street, apartment number, city, state, and zip.
6. Make sure all appropriate signatures are obtained and are signed in **all areas, either in Blue or Black ink, or via digital, electronic signatures (must be Adobe signature, not a Freeform signature)**.
 - a. *Please note that Chief Officers **CANNOT** sign for themselves where a Chief Officer's signature is required;*
 - b. *For this requirement, another Chief Officer **MUST** sign this section of the application.*
7. Legible copies of all pre-requisites must be attached and signed were applicable. **NOTE:** Copies must include both the front and back of the document where applicable. (i.e. CPR & Medical cards).
8. Make sure your Pre-Requisite Verification Form (found in the back of the application) is appropriately marked off and signed in **BLUE** or **BLACK** ink or via digital, electronic signatures (**must be Adobe signature, not a Freeform signature**).

Prerequisites

1. 14 years of age or older
2. Successful completion of an approved Hazardous Materials Awareness Level Course in accordance with NFPA 1072 *Standards for Hazardous Material /Weapons of Mass Destruction Emergency Response Personnel Professional Qualifications* **OR** NFPA 470 *Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders*. ***The course certificate must be current within one (1) year of the date of application.*** Hazardous Materials Awareness or higher course certificates will also be accepted.

Test Policy

Written Test: The written test is randomly generated and consists of fifty (50) 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: The practical evaluation is intended to measure a manipulative skill. For HMA, the skill is assessed in the written method to meet the criteria of the standard. It is designed to measure competence in using the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) and Safety Data Sheets (SDS). The candidate will be given a scenario involving a HAZMAT/WMD material(s) and an approved reference source(s) (i.e., US DOT ERG, SDS, shipping papers), and be required to identify the presence of the hazardous material and its hazards, define an isolation area, indicate methods to deny entry, and make proper notifications per AHJ policies and procedures.

To certify at the awareness level, a candidate will need to successfully pass a written test and Skill A.

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 PSFA or a test site of your choice to schedule retest.

Practical Evaluation: The skill is assessed in the written method to meet the criteria of the standard and will follow the guidance of the written retest policy.

Appeals

A candidate may request a review of his/her performance records by the PSFA within thirty (30) days of receipt of a failure notice. Appeals **MUST** be in writing and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Certification Program.

Send to: Pennsylvania State Fire Academy
Attn: Certification Program Manager
1150 Riverside Drive
Lewistown, PA 17044

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 Pennsylvania Fire Service Voluntary Certification Program provides written notification of its decision to the candidate upon completion of its review and the review by legal counsel of the request for accommodation.

The *Accommodation Request Form* is located on Page 6 of this manual, or it is also available from the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy or test site coordinators. Please contact the Certification Program Manager for further information. 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 twenty (20) working days prior to the scheduled examination will result in a delay in the candidate's date of examination.

Documentation of a specific disability which would impact a candidate's performance on the written examination must be current (within five (5) years of the date of application). Such documentation should include a signed explanation on letterhead stationery from a professional who is familiar with the applicant's disability or a copy of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) from an educational institution. See below comment.

The statement must confirm and describe the disability for which the accommodation is requested. The professional must have expertise in the specific disability for which the accommodation is being requested.

Safety Policy

A candidate should meet the requirements of *NFPA 1580 (2025) Standard for Emergency Responder Occupational Health and Wellness* prior to physical testing to ensure his/her ability to safely perform the required tasks.

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

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

Test Results/Release of Results

The Office of the State Fire Commissioner/PA State Fire Academy (PSFA), or a Delegated Authority Test Site 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, 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 for testing and fails to show up without an acceptable reason, the test site has the right to enforce their no-show policy that could include but is not limited to suspension from testing for an identified period of time and/or financial penalties.

Professional Testing Integrity and Dishonesty

Professional testing dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, facilitating acts of testing dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person. Any instances of testing dishonesty will constitute disciplinary and/or legal actions. All certification candidates shall act with personal integrity, respect others' rights and property, and help maintain a professional environment in which all can be successful.

Test Site Coordinators, Assistant Coordinators, Test Proctors, Evaluators, and Instructors should take reasonable steps to anticipate and deter acts of dishonesty, reinforce integrity, and support appropriate behavior to protect the rights and trust of honest candidates. At the beginning of each testing process, it is the responsibility of those mentioned above to provide test candidates with the "Testing Integrity and Dishonesty" policy and clarify any questions that arise.

Falsification of Documents

Any individual that is found to have forged; altered or falsified documentation for the purpose of certification testing will be indefinitely suspended from participating in any certification exam within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Further action may be taken in accordance with the Pennsylvania Crimes Code 18 Pa C.S. 4904, relating to unsworn falsifications.

Cheating on Test

All candidates are expected to work entirely on his/her own while taking any exam. Violations of testing integrity shall consist of any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids unless provided by the test proctor for the purpose of a specific test, or any persons, papers, or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance.

Document Integrity

Certification candidates are expected to complete any and all work individually. Any materials obtained from other sources such as plot plans, web maps, etc. a source reference must be given. All essay answers must be the candidate's own work.

Study References

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

1. National Fire Protection Association NFPA 470 (2022 Ed) *Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders*
2. U.S. Department of Transportation's Emergency Response Guidebook (2020 Ed)
3. IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association); *Hazardous Materials for First Responders, 6th Edition*

Additional Information

1. Applications shall be submitted to the test site by their established deadline or no later than 3 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 tests.

Certification applications and skill sheets, in addition to the test schedule and test site contact information, can be found at [Firefighter Certifications | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). A page will open with information about the certification program and process. Scroll through the page to find the links for certification applications, skill sheets, test schedule, and test site contact information.

If you have additional questions or concerns about the test process, please contact the Test Site Coordinator at the site in which you applied to be tested at or contact the PSFA Certification Program Staff.

Firefighter Code of Ethics

I understand that I have the responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that reflects proper ethical behavior and integrity. In so doing, I will help foster a continuing positive public perception of the fire service. Therefore, I pledge the following...

- Always conduct myself, on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively on myself, my department, and the fire service in general.
- Accept responsibility for my actions and for the consequences of my actions.
- Support the concept of fairness and the value of diverse thoughts and opinions.
- Avoid situations that would adversely affect the credibility or public perception of the fire service profession.
- Be truthful and honest at all times and report instances of cheating or other dishonest acts that compromise the integrity of the fire service.
- Conduct my personal affairs in a manner that does not improperly influence the performance of my duties or bring discredit to my organization.
- Be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.
- Recognize that I serve in a position of public trust that requires stewardship in the honest and efficient use of publicly owned resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles, and equipment and that these are protected from misuse and theft.
- Exercise professionalism, competence, respect, and loyalty in the performance of my duties and use information, confidential or otherwise, gained by virtue of my position, only to benefit those I am entrusted to serve.
- Avoid financial investments, outside employment, outside business interests or activities that conflict with or are enhanced by my official position or have the potential to create the perception of impropriety.
- Never propose or accept personal rewards, special privileges, benefits, advancement, honors, or gifts that may create a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof.
- Never engage in activities involving alcohol or other substance use or abuse that can impair my mental state or the performance of my duties and compromise safety.
- Never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap.
- Never harass, intimidate, or threaten fellow members of the service or the public and stop or report the actions of other firefighters who engage in such behaviors.
- Responsibly use social networking, electronic communications, or other media technology opportunities in a manner that does not discredit, dishonor, or embarrass my organization, the fire service and the public. I also understand that failure to resolve or report inappropriate use of this media equates to condoning this behavior.

Developed by the National Society of Executive Fire Officers