

**PENNSYLVANIA FIRE SERVICE
VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**



CANDIDATE HANDBOOK

Incident Safety Officer

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) and the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC)

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.

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

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. Mailing 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. Legible copies of all pre-requisites must be attached and signed where applicable. NOTE, that copies should include both front and back copies where applicable. (i.e. CPR & Medical cards)
7. Make sure your Pre-Requisite Verification Form is appropriately marked off and signed in blue or black ink.

Pre-requisites

For certification at Fire Department Incident Safety Officer, the candidate shall meet the following requirements:

1. Meets the qualifications and age requirements;
2. **Fire Officer I Certification** as defined in NFPA 1021, Attach a copy of your Fire Officer I certificate. (Requirement 4.5.1) Fire Officer I Certificate Number: _____.
3. **Hazardous Materials Training and/or Certification**: Candidates must be currently trained or certified at the First Responder Operations Level or higher in accordance with NFPA 472 "Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents". The following courses of instruction have been determined to meet this requirement.

Attach a copy of one of the following recognized certificates (Delmar or Jones & Bartlett curriculums).

- Hazardous Materials Operations Level, **OR**
- Hazardous Materials Operations Level Annual Refresher

Training and/or Certification certificates must be dated within one (1) year of the date of application. If certification is greater than one (1) year you must show proof of completion of a current refresher training course.

4. **Successful completion of National Fire Academy, Incident Safety Officer Course (ISO)**
(Requirement 4.5.2).

Incident Safety Officer Certification Pathway



Please refer to the Incident Safety Officer application OR the previous section of this document titled “Pre-requisites” for a complete listing of approved courses that will be accepted to meet the pre-requisites.

Testing Policy

Written Test

The written test is randomly generated. Passing scores for any written test is seventy percent (70%).

Skills Test

Must pass 100% of the stations offered.

Re-test Policy

Written Test

1. If you are unsuccessful you may retest a total of 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

1. Must pass 100% of the skill stations offered.
 - If you are unsuccessful on three (3) or less skill stations, you may retest the same day. (only one retest per skill station);
 - If you are unsuccessful on four (4) or more skill stations, you may NOT retest the same day. Skill retests must be scheduled at a later time.
 - A total of eight (8) retest attempts are permitted and must complete in one (1) year to successfully complete the testing process.

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

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

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.

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 8 of this manual or is available from the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy and 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 stationary 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 1582, Standard on Medical Requirements for Firefighters and information for Fire Department Physicians 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) 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.

No show policy

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

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 own work.

Study Reference List

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

1. NFPA 1521, 2008 Edition Standard for Fire Department Incident Safety Officer Professional qualification
2. National Fire Academy (NFA) Incident Safety Officer Course
3. IFSTA, Fire Department Safety Officer, 1st edition
4. Jones and Bartlett, Exam Prep Book “Fire Department Safety Officer”
<http://www.jbpub.com/fire/Exam/prep/>
5. Skill sheets and other testing information available on the OSFC website under the Certification Link. www.osfc.pa.gov

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. Bring all appropriate PPE for completion of all possible skill stations
5. Dress appropriately, bring extra dry clothes
6. Bring food and beverage with you, stay hydrated.

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.

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.
- Responsible use of 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