
FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

By Mattie Mendoza and Phil Lockwood

Q I am currently certified as an EMT-Basic and am about to complete EMT-Paramedic training. I know as of January 1, 2010, initial applicants have to submit a FBI background check. Because I will be submitting an Initial Paramedic application, do I need to have the FBI background check done too?

DSHS: No. The requirements for FBI background checks are for applicants who *do not* currently hold EMS certification. Upgrades in certification such as EMT to EMT-I, EMT-I to EMT-P or EMT-P to Licensed Paramedic, do *not* have to meet the FBI background check requirement. Also, if you hold a current EMT certification and apply to be a certified Instructor, you are *not* required to meet the FBI background check requirement. If you have further questions concerning FBI background checks, contact the EMS Certification unit at (512) 834-6700.

Q My EMT certification expires October 2010. I have completed all of the required continuing education hours, and I would like to submit my renewal application now. Will I lose time on my certification if I submit early?

DSHS: No. In fact, according to TAC §157.31(s)(3), you can submit your application up to one *year* prior to your expiration date and not lose any time, because your new expiration date, after renewal, will be four years from your current expiration date. For example, if your certification expires July 31, 2011,

you can legally submit your renewal application on July 31, 2010. Once your application is approved, your new expiration date will be July 31, 2015, which is four years from your previous expiration date. Of course not everyone can submit their Renewal Application a year prior to their expiration date, but EMS Certification does strongly suggest you submit your renewal application *at least* eight weeks prior to your expiration date to accommodate for application processing time. For additional information concerning renewal of your state certification, contact the EMS certification unit at (512) 834-6700.

Q I hold current National Registry certification. Do I also need to complete the continuing education (CE) hours required to renew my state certification?

DSHS: That depends on which renewal option you choose on your State of Texas Renewal application. According to TAC §157.34, there are four options you can choose from for state recertification. They are: Option 1—Written Examination, Option 2—Continuing Education, Option 3—National Registry, and Option 4—Formal Recertification Course. If you hold current National Registry certification, you can choose Option 3—National Registry on your State Renewal application, and you *do not* have to do any further CE hours to meet your state recertification requirements. You will have to list your current National Registry number

on your Renewal application, so it can be verified, but no additional state CE hours are required. There is one clear advantage to choosing to renew your state certification with Option 3—the National Registry: You will *not* get selected for a random CE audit by DSHS for that certification period. Anyone who chooses the CE renewal option, and then is selected for CE audit, must provide proof that all of the CE requirements for the previous certification period were met prior to submitting the renewal application. If you don't hold current National Registry, you will have to choose from one of the other three renewal options. For more information about state of Texas EMS certification renewal options, you can view the Recertification/Re-Licensure tab on our website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/recertinfo.shtm, or call the EMS Certification unit at (512) 834-6700.

Q I just received notice from the National Registry that I passed the exam and now hold current National Registry certification. I already submitted my state of Texas EMS Initial application, and the only thing I was missing was my National Registry number. Do I need to submit my National Registry information to the EMS Certification unit?

DSHS: No. The National Registry will electronically send your National Registry information to the EMS Certification unit if you noted that you were taking National Registry for state of Texas certification. But, if you get your National Registry card in

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the mail and you still aren't certified by the state of Texas, you can fax a copy of your National Registry card as proof. The National Registry card can be faxed to (512) 834-6714. If you have any questions concerning Texas EMS certification, feel free to call the EMS Certification office at (512) 834-6700.

Q | I hear predictions of many hurricanes this season. How can I get involved in the disaster response process?

DSHS: Individual offerings of disaster response services cannot be accommodated very efficiently. The department contracts with EMS providers, first responder organizations and RACs (Regional Advisory Councils) to arrange for EMS/ambulance service and/or emergency medical personnel. EMS providers who submit an MOA (memorandum of agreement) to provide disaster response assistance in an emergency incident can be quickly deployed, with reimbursement arrangements worked out in advance. Other individual and/or specialized medical personnel and services are arranged through contracts with medical staffing services. Often, strike teams (combinations of resources, complete with a leader and common communications), task forces (grouped resources, such as multiple strike teams) and so on are assembled in advance to facilitate coordination. See our website (www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/MOAPage.shtm) for more details and links to MOAs.

Q | My coworker and I have been debating EMS continuing education. He says CE is nothing but review materials to make sure we remain competent. I say the 'C' in continuing education means we're supposed to be exposed to technological advances in the EMS field. Who's right?

DSHS: The "continuing" in continuing education applies to the goal of lifelong learning by emergency medical professionals. Some of the education should be new, cutting edge information, but some should also address content identified through assessment of practice outcomes and quality improvement processes. If common mistakes or misconceptions are identified, training should be customized to alleviate the problems. For more information, see the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) continuing education guidelines at www.nhtsa.gov (search for continuing education). Continued learning activities are good indicators, but not assurances of competency, however.

Q | I have been certified for years, but I'm not sure I remain competent because I have never worked on the street. How can my EMT certification mean the same thing as the guy who works regularly and has tons of experience?

DSHS: You may not be street-level competent, but don't worry about it too much. It can be quite a journey from entry-level competency to continued (on the

job) competency. Entry-level indicators of competency are evaluated through examination and skills evaluation and are considered potential competency exhibited by the award of certification or licensure. Medical directors utilize a credentialing process whereby they initially and routinely check out the medical knowledge and skills of EMS personnel prior to authorizing them to practice. EMS firms must ensure you are appropriately authorized, interned, engaged and operationally proficient at the job by maintaining effective supervision and management through established policies and procedures. Continued competence is exhibited on the job and is usually considered to be a shared responsibility between the triad of 1) the individual certificant/licensee, 2) the medical director and 3) the EMS provider for whom you work. Of course, you are responsible and accountable for maintaining your knowledge and skills, following policies and protocols, and just generally using good judgment.

Q | I know there is a coordinator course for the administrator of EMS training programs—why isn't there a course for EMS managers?

DSHS: Actually, there are good management/leadership courses available. Although we don't currently have a certification for EMS managers, it's a great idea for potential managers to attend training as opposed to a trial by fire method of on the job training. You can usually find such a training source with an Internet search for "EMS administrator training." TEEX offers an EMS Leadership Academy. Go to: www.teex.com and click on course catalog.