

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

By Mattie Mendoza and Phil Lockwood

Q I received a deficiency notice that stated that I need to submit additional documentation in order to complete my EMT application. I faxed the required documentation to DSHS a week ago. How long will it take to update, and how can I speed up the process in the future?

DSHS: In order to shorten the deficiency response time, please include a copy of your deficiency letter when you submit additional documentation. This will help in two ways. It notifies EMS Certification personnel that the documentation is in response to a deficiency letter rather than a new application, and it ensures that your new document/information is correctly matched up with your original application. You can fax additional/corrected information to 512-834-6714. If your application is deficient because you owe additional fees, you must mail the fee with a copy of your deficiency letter to the address listed on the deficiency letter. For more information about deficiencies contact the EMS Certification office at 512-834-6734.

Q I attended a class to renew my CPR for Healthcare Professionals card twice during my last EMS certification period. Can I use the hours from both times I took that class as continuing education hours?

DSHS: Yes. According to the Texas Administrative Code §157.38 (f) Activities Unacceptable as Continuing Education, the following activities are *not* acceptable toward re-certification or re-licensure: “(8) Any identical CE repeated more than once during the accrual period.”

You may repeat the required card courses, such as CPR for Healthcare Professionals, once during your four year certification period and count the CE hours both times you attended the course. If you take a course more than twice during your four-year CE certification, you may count the CE hours only twice. You will find more information on approved continuing education hours on the EMS Certification website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/continuinged.shtm. If you have additional questions, contact the EMS Certification office at 512-834-6734.

Q My legal name is Timothy James Jones, but I go by T.J. Jones. Is it okay if I put T.J. on my EMT application and subsequently on my DSHS EMS Certification card?

DSHS: Yes and no. Your DSHS EMS Certification card is a legal, identifying document. You want the name on your DSHS certification card to be consistent with other legal identifying documents, such as your drivers license. Also, once you are employed by an EMS provider, the EMS provider will add your name to its roster of employees and submit that list to DSHS. If there is a discrepancy between the roster and the name DSHS has for you in the database, it can create problems for the EMS provider and you. The bottom line is that your EMS Certification card is your card, and it's your responsibility to use that card to identify yourself as a State of Texas Certified EMS professional. You can put whatever name you choose on the card, but if it creates confusion as to who you are, the certification card is not doing its job. Contact the EMS Certification office directly at 512-834-6734 if you have additional questions.

Q How do I find out the dates for EMS week in future years? I need to know for planning purposes.

DSHS: Go to the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) website at www.acep.org/emsweek or just calculate it to be the third *full* week of May each year.

Q What are the requirements, laws or rules that address EMS patches, decals, and so on? I'm in the process of writing a procedure manual for my EMS service.

DSHS: Specifically, there are no Texas EMS requirements, laws or administrative code rules that address patch protocol. The specifications of Texas EMS patches are posted at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/formsresources.shtm (scroll down to EMS Patch Information), along with information to patch vendors and a list of vendors (may not be comprehensive and posted at the request of the vendors).

The only relevant regulation is that an individual must not misrepresent his or her level of certification or licensure or they risk violation of the Texas Administrative Code rules, specifically 25 TAC, §157.16(b)(13).

Q Is there a federal agency over EMS?

DSHS: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) effectively serves as the “parent” agency for EMS. To continue that analogy, think of NHTSA as the parent of “adult” state EMS agencies. NHTSA influences and supports EMS, but its direct authority over state EMS is limited. It does not directly govern state EMS. It began in 1966 (then known as the National Highway Safety Bureau) in an effort to reduce the number of injuries and deaths on America's highways (hence its foundation in the transportation agency instead of in a health care agency). Information and grant funding were its major products back in those days. Nowadays, NHTSA serves as an informational clearinghouse for the many federal agencies that significantly affect and influence EMS, including the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Communications Commission (communications), General Services Administration (federal vehicle standards), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA—includes EMS for Children and the Office of Rural Health Policy), and so on.

Q Does the Governor's EMS & Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) mandate state EMS standards?

DSHS: GETAC's role is directed more toward reviewing and recommending rather than toward developing or mandating standards. The enabling statute for GETAC, Health and Safety Code (HSC), §773.012, prescribes the composition of GETAC and directs the council to meet at least quarterly (in Austin). §773.012 specifically lists its responsibilities, which are: 1) to review rules relating to HSC Chapter 773 and recommend changes, 2) to assess the need for rural EMS, and 3) to develop a strategic plan for EMS education/certification and the development of EMS and trauma systems.