
FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions

By Mattie Mendoza and Phil Lockwood

Q: Once I have my National Registry card, am I automatically state-certified as well?

A: No. The National Registry and the state of Texas EMS certification are two separate entities. You are only legal to work in Texas if you have attained state of Texas certification. To attain state of Texas EMS certification, you must submit an application, pay the appropriate fee and meet all other initial certification requirements, including taking and passing the National Registry exam. You can find all of the requirements for initial state of Texas certification on the EMS Trauma Systems website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/CertInfo.shtm. The National Registry has its own application process and does *not* submit your state of Texas certification application for you. For information about National Registry, or to schedule your exam, please contact the National Registry or view their website at www.nremt.org.

Q: I submitted my state of Texas EMT-Basic initial application, and I just received notification from the National Registry office that I have passed my National Registry exam. Do I need to notify the state that I have passed my National Registry exam?

A: No. The National Registry

will submit your exam results electronically to the EMS Certification Department. It typically takes about five to seven business days for National Registry to notify EMS Certification of your exam results. You can check our website to see whether your application has been approved at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/NewCert.shtm.

Q: What is that number I am given at the end of the TxOnline electronic application process, and do I need to keep it?

A: Yes, you do need to keep that number. The number is commonly referred to as the *trace number*, and it is your **only** proof that you submitted your application and paid the application fee. You will receive a trace number only if you complete the entire electronic application process. The trace number (which will begin with the numbers 537), is the only way for EMS Certification to retrieve your electronic application. The easiest way to make sure you keep the trace number is to simply print it out and put it with your other EMS documentation. Remember, if you do not print or write down your trace number, you have no proof that you ever submitted an electronic application or paid the fee. Despite this minor drawback, electronic application submission

is favorable for many reasons—it cuts out mail time, so it reaches the EMS office faster; you can pay with either an electronic check or credit card; it's safe and secure; and it's available to you 24 hours a day.

Q: I used the TxOnline electronic application system to submit my EMT-B renewal application. I later realized that I forgot to answer one of the questions. Can I access that application and make changes to it after submission?

A: No. Once you complete and submit your electronic application, you **cannot** go back into the application and update or change any of the information. But, at the end of the application process, you should have received a *trace number* (a.k.a. tracking or confirmation number). After the Fiscal Department processes your application fee (five to seven business days) they will send the application electronically to the EMS Certification Department for application processing. At that point, the EMS Certification Department will be able to access your application with your trace number. So, if you need to make changes to your application, you should contact the EMS Certification Department five to seven business days after submission and provide them with the trace number. You can contact

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the EMS Certification Department at (512) 834-6700.

Q: I'm new to EMS, but I plan to make it my career. Does DSHS have recommendations for me?

A: As the state regulatory agency, career counseling is a little out of our range, but we do get lots of questions like this one, so we will make some suggestions. Although this is not a comprehensive list, the following are some pursuits that may serve to expand your experience and knowledge of EMS.

Focus on getting lots of experience as a street medic while continuing your academic education. EMS is a practical-scientific field, and the combination of experience and formal (life-long) education are essential. In addition to academic education, technical courses such as the various card courses are valuable (most can be searched with the words "EMS life support training").

Once you've honed your skills as a caregiver, you may want to move on to business-related career development activities such as front-line supervisor training. Although many choose the "learn by doing" route, this type of training can be a valuable shortcut that will help you avoid pitfalls. There are also classes that will train you to perform middle and upper management duties. Understanding the business operations side of EMS is key to career development, no matter what level you end up in. Training on the incident command system for operation during major disaster incidents is a key area, too. To find some of the above courses, do an Internet search using the following search phrases: "Texas EMS career and leadership training" and "ICS training."

EMS, like all medical and health professions, is a constantly

changing field. Keeping up with new developments requires constant reading. Subscribe to a wide range of EMS-related magazines and/or browse Internet sites, blogs and listserves. Attend meetings, such as the Governor's EMS/Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC), and stay informed about legislative activities that impact the field.

Stress management is another key to excelling in public safety activities. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't care for others. Being aware of the perils of daily involvement in life-and-death situations is half the battle, but you must constantly monitor and care for yourself, and be ready to get help when it's necessary.

This answer could continue for several pages, and a few short paragraphs won't be sufficient to guide you through a lifetime of EMS. But, the fundamental concept of experience coupled with never-ending education is essential to success.

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What's up in your area?

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