

FAQs, July/August 08

Q: Can I do my training program clinical/hospital hours at the hospital where I work?

A: This is a question you'll have to ask your coordinator. The coordinator of the training program is required by rule to have affiliation agreements in place, to train and evaluate clinical and internship preceptors and to develop field internship and clinical objectives for all courses s/he's responsible for. If the clinical site where you work was approved and agreements signed as one of the training program's authorized sites through the self-study/site-visit process, there would be no problem. But if your hospital was not specifically approved in connection with your coordinator's training program or if your supervisor/preceptor wasn't authorized or isn't supervised by your coordinator, you wouldn't be able to "freelance" your hospital hours. The coordinator must have agreements in place or secure new agreements that provide the authority to require specific assistive performance for each student.

Q: Are my nursing school hours acceptable as EMS continuing education?

A: Some of the academic hours you received in nursing school may be used as EMS continuing education credit. EMS rules require the course be within the framework of a curriculum that leads to a degree in emergency medical services or any credit hour course relevant to emergency health care. Some of the courses for a nursing degree may be the same as or applicable to EMS training, e.g., anatomy and physiology. To get approval for CE hours through your academic courses, submit a transcript and a course description to your local public health region office for course review. See this webpage for complete information on the academic credit CE approval process: www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/Academce.shtm.

Q: What is the department's process for reporting/managing contaminated sharps injuries and other exposure to bloodborne pathogens?

A: For an injury data report, reporting information, bloodborne pathogen and exposure control plans, see the Infectious Disease Control Unit (IDCU) website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/bloodborne_pathogens. The IDCU site also provides a link to administrative code rules 25 TAC, Chapter 97, Control of Communicable Diseases. Sections §97.11 and §97.12 deal with notification of EMS responders and post-exposure management.

Q: I was recently hired at an ambulance company, but I can't start working on the ambulance until I have my state certification. How long does the application process take?

A: Processing times vary according to circumstances, e.g., application volume, deficient applications, criminal history administrative review, etc., but there are a few constants I can share with you:

US Mail: 6 days – At least 3 workdays (average) each way.

Money: 10 days – Can range from 3 to 10 workdays. **All** applications (even electronic) first go to the department's Fiscal Processing office, which is in Austin, but in a different building than EMS. Staff process all money there before forwarding your applications to us. With electronically submitted applications, the fee first goes to Texas Online, a contractor that processes electronic applications and fees for all state agencies. Texas Online then sends the fee information to our fiscal department for us to process.

Application processing: 5-10 business days – This includes running the criminal history background check, data entry, assuring all documentation is accounted for and correct, and printing of the certificates.

That brings the process **total to 26 business days**, or about 5 weeks, from the time you submit your application until you receive your certificate or license. Applying online can reduce the time as it eliminates mail time and reduces the time it takes for us to receive the fees. We encourage electronic submission. **Note that the portion our office controls is only 5-10 days of that whole process.** The EMS Certification unit that processes all certification applications for all EMS personnel in Texas has eight employees. As previously mentioned, this processing time will be extended if your application is subject to an Administrative Review based on your criminal history, if the application submitted is incomplete, if your check is returned due to non-sufficient funds, or if we have to wait for your National Registry test scores. For information on NR exams, you will need to contact National Registry. There is a lot of information on NR's website; you may want to explore it first to see if your quest for information can be fulfilled there. The NR website is: www.nremt.org. If not, you can contact National Registry by phone by calling 614-888-4484. You can also monitor our website to see if your application has been processed and approved. You will find the Check Your Certification tab at: www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/NewCert.shtm.

Q: I am planning to renew my certification by taking the written exam. What happens if I don't pass the exam?

A: If you fail the examination for recertification, you may attempt two retests. For each subsequent retest attempt, you may apply for and retest at a lower level, if applicable. Also, an applicant who selects option 1 (written exam), and attempts the exam but does not pass the National Registry assessment examination, may not gain recertification by any other option and shall not qualify for inactive certification. An applicant who does not pass the third attempt at the National Registry assessment examination must successfully complete a formal recertification course; submit a course completion certificate for the formal recertification course, reflecting that the course was completed after the second retest failure; and pass the National Registry assessment examination. An applicant shall not qualify for more than a total of six attempts of the exam, in any combination of levels attempted. This is in accordance to Texas Administrative Code 157.37(b). (Link to TAC from our website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/ruldraft.shtm.) For more information about the National Registry assessment examination, please contact National Registry at: www.nremt.org.

Q: How does the electronic TexasOnline EMS personnel renewal process work?

A: Log into electronic TexasOnline application at:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/Txonlinelinks.shtm. Use your EMS ID (Personnel ID) and Social Security number. The system will verify your eligibility and let you know if you can renew your certificate online, or if you will have to print out the application and mail it in. (Volunteers who do not pay fees are not eligible for online renewal.) If you are eligible to renew electronically, the system will prompt you with questions to answer regarding maintenance of your certificate/license. A change of address can also be completed at this time. Once the application is completed, you will be given an opportunity to review the information you entered. Proceed to the payment page. After providing payment information (you may pay using Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express or ACH electronic check), the final step is to view and print the transaction receipt. **Keep this transaction receipt as it is your proof of electronic application submission and of payment.** Once processed by certification staff (approximately 4-6 weeks), the renewed certification/license will be mailed to the mailing address you provided. You can always check the status of

your application/certification from the Check Your Certification link on our website at:

www.dshs.state.tx.us/emtraumasystems/NewCert.shtm.