



# CERTIFICATION POLICY MANUAL

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# ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL CERTIFICATION POLICY MANUAL

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## PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

The Alaska Fire Standards Council (AFSC) has prepared this manual to define the policy and procedure for fire service certification in Alaska. This document provides guidance for the Certifying Officer (CO) in his or her role in the fire certification testing process. This manual is for use by the Certifying Officers during certification testing and to assist fire department Training Program Managers, Training Officers (TO) and other individuals in managing an accredited fire training programs. This manual contains information pertaining to all AFSC certification directives.

The AFSC extend our grateful acknowledgment to the Alaska Division of Fire and Life Safety and the Alaska Emergency Medical Services Section of the Department of Health and Human Services for their assistance in preparing this guide. The Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training (formerly known as *Training and Education Bureau*) originally created much of the content in this guidebook and based it on the certification manual developed by the EMS section for assisting their certifying officers. Through the international certification accreditation process the AFSC has received ongoing support for directive updates from many agencies, including critical support from various members of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress ([IFSAAC](#)).

This manual contains the AFSC policies and procedures related fire standards testing and certification. The AFSC staff or an assigned Certifying Officer (CO) may delegate some of the test site responsibilities outlined in this manual. However, the AFSC ultimately holds the CO responsible for the consistency of the examination. The following guiding principles can assist Certifying Officers in achieving the goals established by the AFSC:

1. Support fire department accreditation through leadership
2. Conduct assignments ethically, with integrity and honesty
3. Uphold fair and consistent test site practices
4. Maintain minimum standards requirements at all times

This manual is available for downloading at the AFSC web site: [www.firestandards.alaska.gov](http://www.firestandards.alaska.gov)

Send suggestions for improving the manual via mail, fax, or by e-mail to:

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Revision of this manual is conducted as needed to address the requirements of the AFSC administrative operation and/or third party accreditation requirements under IFSAC/ProBoard. For eligibility to perform Certifying Officer assignments, an individual must read this manual and complete all associated requirements specified in this document prior to serving as an authorized certification test representative. The AFSC recommends that the Certifying Officer review this manual upon acceptance of an assignment to conduct a test site examination and prior to arrival at a test site.

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## MISSION AND AUTHORITY OF THE ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL

It is the policy of the state to protect its residents and their property from the ravages of fire. The state recognizes the need for the state to participate in providing an educational and training system that meets the needs of all communities and all fire services personnel. The Alaska legislature finds that fire is a constant threat and homes, places of employment, modes of transportation, and our natural resources need a system of fire protection that is based on the most current, practical standards and educational principles.

Under Alaska Statute [18.70.350](#) the council may:

- 1) adopt regulations for the administration of AS 18.70.320 - 18.70.369, including regulations
  - a. establishing minimum training and performance standards for certification of fire services personnel that are consistent with the standards of the National Fire Protection Association or other applicable standards;
  - b. establishing minimum fire training curriculum requirements for certification of training programs that are designed to enable trainees to meet the standards established under (A) of this paragraph;
  - c. governing the procedure for certification of fire services training programs that meet the minimum curriculum requirements adopted under this section;
  - d. governing the procedure for certification of individuals who satisfy the minimum training and performance standards established under this section; and
  - e. governing the procedure for revocation of the certificate of a person or program that, having been issued a certificate under this section, fails at a later date to meet the standards adopted by the council under this section; the procedures must be consistent with AS [44.62](#) (Administrative Procedure Act);
- 2) consult and cooperate with municipalities, agencies of the state, other governmental agencies, universities, colleges, and other institutions concerning the development of fire services training schools and programs offered in the state;
- 3) employ an administrator and other persons necessary to carry out its duties; and
- 4) charge and collect fees determined by the council to be necessary.

## DEFINITIONS

### Overview

The definitions contained in this section shall apply to the terms used in this manual. Where terms are not defined here or under another heading, they shall be defined using their ordinarily accepted meanings within the context in which they are used. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, most current edition, shall be the source for the ordinarily accepted meaning.

### General Definitions

**Accredit:** To give official authorization to or approval of; to provide with credentials; to recognize an educational institution as maintaining standards that qualify its graduates for admission to higher or more specialized institutions or for professional practice.

**Accreditation Manager:** The State of Alaska Fire Training Administrator designated to accredit fire training programs offered on behalf of the State Division of Fire and Life Safety.

**Accredited Organization:** A fire department or emergency response organization that has met the Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training requirements defined in the accreditation manual and audit checklist. These entities have received approval to conduct a fire training course(s) that has an intended outcome of AFSC certification testing.

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**AFSC:** The Alaska Fire Standards Council operations as a whole, including appointed/designated members and administrative staff

**AFSC Administration:** The staff that manage the administrative functions of the AFSC

**Approved:** Acceptable to the Alaska Fire Standards Council

**Assistant:** The individual who supports the Certifying Officer at a test site and is responsible for assisting evaluators within a practical examination station.

**Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ):** An organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing the requirement of a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials, and installation, or a procedure.

**Authorized Department Designee:** A fire department member that is authorized by the Fire Chief to function in the capacity of a Test Site Coordinator or Training Officer for the purpose of verifying department member candidates are eligible to test for certification.

**Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training (BFAST):** Division of Fire and Life Safety Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training: Includes paid staff that manages the administrative functions of the AFSC and day-to-day tasks of the fire certification process.

**Candidate:** The individual who is taking a certification examination for a level that they are not yet certified at.

**Certify:** To attest authoritatively, such as to attest as being true or as represented or as meeting a standard.

**Certification:** The issuance of a document that states that an individual has demonstrated the knowledge and skills necessary to function in a particular fire service professional field.

**Certifying Officer (CO):** The individual who is authorized by the AFSC to manage a certification examination test site.

**Council:** The Alaska Fire Standards Council voting members appointed by the governor, or designated in statute

**Evaluator:** The individual who supports the Certifying Officer at a test site and is responsible for observing practical examination candidates and for completing skills evaluation using established criteria.

**Job Performance Requirement (JPR):** A written statement that describes a specific job task, lists the items necessary to complete the task, and defines measurable or observable outcomes and evaluation areas for the specific task.

**Lead Instructor/Instructor:** The individual that has the primary responsibility for the delivery training material to candidates during an accredited course.

**Proctor:** An individual who is authorized to administer a written examination on behalf of the Alaska Fire Standards Council.

**Simulation:** The repeatable act of carrying out a job performance requirement in a safe environment that reproduces actual job performance conditions to the fullest possible extent.

**Standard:** Something set up and established by authority as a rule for the measure of quantity, weight, extent, value, or quality.

**Subject Matter Expert (SME):** An individual with a high level of specialty training or knowledge as it relates to a particular level/scope of a standard or job performance tasks.

**Test Site Coordinator (TSC):** The designated representative of the entity requesting a certification examination who has the responsibility to support the Certifying Officer by preparing and supporting practical exam stations at a test site; generally the organization's Training Officer or designee.

**Training Officer:** Coordinates activities relating to fire suppression training. Develops training programs, develops curricula, and coordinates activities at fire training schools, seminars and workshops.

**Training Program Manager:** The entity representative that is responsible for maintaining accreditation program requirements as defined within the Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training accreditation manual and AFSC accreditation policies.

**Written Test Contact:** An entity's designated representative who has the authorization for receipt of written certification examination scores and the responsibility to distribute them to individual candidates.

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## ALASKA FIRE SERVICE CERTIFICATION BACKGROUND

In the 1970's, fire service agencies in Alaska requested that Fire Service Training create a Firefighter I training and certification program for use throughout the state. The basis of the program was an NFPA referenced standard that would allow localized accreditation by Fire Service Training for departments to conduct in house training and testing that would result in individual state certification for Firefighter I. In the 1980's Fire Service Training expanded the program to include Firefighter II.

In the early 1990's Fire Service Training began to administer all firefighter written examinations, but fire service agencies continued to conduct the practical exam testing at the local level. By 2000, Fire Service Training conducted all practical and written examinations for firefighter certification with state endorsed Certifying Officers. In 1998, the Alaska legislature created the Alaska Fire Standards Council (AFSC) to provide oversight to fire service standards and certification process and assist the Fire Service Training office in achieving International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) accreditation for firefighter certification directives.

In 2005 Fire Service Training was renamed the Training and Education Bureau (TEB), and TEB staff oversaw all fire service certification testing until the AFSC administrative office took over the responsibility in 2008. In 2017 the AFSC and TEB units merged to form the Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training (BFAST) Currently, fire service training is still conducted at the local level through training programs accredited by the BFAST, but under the AFSC authority paid staff manages all final practical and written certification examinations in accordance with the AFSC [Certification Policy Manual](#).

## NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

### Accreditation Program Requirements

The AFSC has multiple certification directives that are accredited by the [International Fire Service Accreditation Congress](#) (IFSAC) and/or the [National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications](#) (Pro Board). The basis for accreditation approval is the established AFSC administrative policies and procedures for directives, and the testing and evaluation requirements evaluated by the accrediting entities. Strict adherence to all AFSC directives is required for compliance with accreditation requirements.

This Certification Policy Manual describes these directives. Whenever applicable, the AFSC models Certifying Officer training workshops and certification directive revisions using existing policy and procedures for accreditation programs.

The [National Fire Protection Association's](#) (NFPA) Fire Service Professional Qualifications Standards, or other standards approved by the AFSC, IFSAC, and/or ProBoard, are the basis to conduct accredited certification testing.

### Undue Influence Policy

The Alaska Fire Standards Council shall not allow any entity, organization or individual to exercise undue or inappropriate influence over the state of Alaska firefighter certification policies and procedures.

### Delegation of Certifying Authority

In compliance with IFSAC and ProBoard policies and procedures, the AFSC does not delegate certifying authority to any entity at this time, but it reserves the right to do so in the future. The AFSC, acting as the accreditation entity for the state of Alaska, will not delegate its certifying authority to another entity possessing a broader service area in terms of geography or constituency.



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## Testing to the Current Standard

The Alaska Fire Standards Council shall certify personnel to the most recent edition of the NFPA standard(s), or other bona fide standards, that have been adopted by the AFSC.

Each certification directive shall list certification examination references to include:

- a. the current standard
- b. the referenced text(s) for written test material
- c. the practical skills packet

All certification directive and related skills packets are available through the [AFSC certification webpage](#).

## Updated Standards for Certification

The Alaska Fire Standards Council may continue to certify to the previous edition of a recognized standard for a period of up to two (2) calendar years from the official date of adoption of the newest version.

## Certification Data

The AFSC will collect and maintain the following data on certification:

1. Names of candidates tested
2. Individual identification number or equivalent
3. Certification level records
4. Date of Certification
5. IFSAC seal number (as applicable)
6. PROBOARD identification number (as applicable)

The AFSC policy related to the maintenance of data is to maintain all data items listed above indefinitely. The AFSC will provide IFSAC and ProBoard with this data at least twice annually.

## Non-Discrimination and Equitably

The AFSC shall make all testing and certifying services available to all of its constituents without regard to race, sex, or ethnic origin. Certification testing for all candidates shall be in accordance with the policy and procedure within this document and the directive manual associated with the level of examination.

The AFSC may permit accommodations for candidates with disabilities, to the extent that testing will maintain the minimum standard criteria for the level tested.

## Fee Schedule

The AFSC shall establish and maintain an equitable certification fee structure. Testing and certification service fees are determined by the Council on a routine basis and applied as appropriate. Individual candidate fees will apply to test request for groups with greater than the minimum number of candidates, as determined by the Council.

When an accredited department requests a group examination with less than the minimum number of candidates, the AFSC will support the request with a direct expense process. The AFSC will bill all test support cost (i.e. Certifying Officer hours, travel/per diem, and administrative service fees) to an entity requesting a test with less than the minimum number of candidates. This process enables the AFSC to support a departments' request for essential certification testing and permits the AFSC to recuperate costs commensurate with test support expenditures.

A list of the [AFSC Certification Fee Schedule](#) is available for download on the AFSC [Certifications](#) webpage.

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## ADA Policy

The following information is in reference to the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA Title III Technical Assistance Manual: Covering Public Accommodations. Additional information is available online at <http://www.ada.gov/taman3.html>.

Where necessary, the AFSC may be required to provide auxiliary aids or services, unless it can demonstrate that offering a particular auxiliary aid or service would fundamentally alter the examination or result in an undue burden. Some individuals with learning disabilities may need auxiliary aids or services, such as readers, because of problems in perceiving and processing written information.

AFSC has designed written certification examinations to test specific skills or areas of knowledge. An individual with a disability that limits the ability to read written material may be unable to pass an examination because of limited reading ability, regardless of his or her knowledge or ability in the area that the designed test measures. The AFSC will make every reasonable effort to administer the test in a manner that enables the applicant to demonstrate his or her skill or knowledge, rather than the ability to read. However, if the design of the test is to measure the ability to read written material, such as the use of the North American Emergency Response Guidebook used for Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations, will administer examination material in written form because the result will accurately reflect the individual's ability to complete the job performance requirement.

The AFSC will require that an applicant provide documentation of the existence and nature of a disability as evidence that he or she is entitled to modifications or aids. Requests for documentation are limited to the need for the modification or aid requested. Appropriate documentation includes a letter from a physician or other professional, or evidence of a prior diagnosis or accommodation, such as eligibility for a special education program. The AFSC will provide individuals with certain disabilities with more time to complete an examination. An individual, or testing agency Training Officer/Test Site Coordinator, who request additional time is *required* to notify the AFSC of the request when submitting a Test Notification Form. The submission must include appropriate documentation to establish the need for additional time, or other accommodations are necessary, because of a documented disability.

The AFSC must provide a candidate that requires the alternative administration of a written examination for ADA compliance with a discreet area that will allow the privacy to the candidate and will not disrupt other examination candidates.

## Accreditation Representative Examination Observation

The AFSC shall permit a representative of IFSAC or ProBoard to observe any testing process upon receiving notice of intent to observe the test at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the test. The certifying entity shall provide the dates, time, and location of any testing process upon request for such information from IFSAC Administration.

## Review of Test Materials by Accreditation Site Team

All test items and materials will be available to the site team and/or administrative reviewers. The AFSC shall maintain tests in a secure area at all times. During the Site Team visit, the review location will be within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Anchorage building in a secure room. The DPS building is a secure building and permits access only to authorized personnel. The AFSC shall secure the review area at all times during a site team audit. The AFSC staff will ensure all relevant materials are located on site during a site audit.

## Test Materials Selection and Validation

**Written (cognitive)** examination materials validation shall be against the NFPA standard for the level of certification. Acquisition of examinations for accredited certifications levels shall be through credible vendor(s)

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and validated by the AFSC. The AFSC shall select local Subject Matter Experts (SME's) to review test materials to ensure the applicability of all materials for use within the jurisdiction. The SME review committee shall identify substandard questions and the AFSC administrative staff will edit the test bank as warranted.

The AFSC shall maintain separate test banks for each level of certification issued by the AFSC. All test banks shall include sufficient questions to correlate 100% of the standards specified for each certification level. Test banks shall be at least twice as large as the number of questions used per test generated and randomly selected from each group of questions correlated to each JPR or requisite knowledge. Each question within a test bank shall identify the appropriate NFPA Standard (or other approved standard[s]) and edition used for testing, and questions shall be the same standard and edition as the accredited level. Each question shall reference to the standard objective(s) and the appropriate reference source.

The AFSC will monitor the number of questions for each category to ensure that an adequate number of questions are in the test bank. If a required NFPA category lacks a sufficient number of questions, the AFSC will develop questions that target the deficient category. A designated review committee shall approve all final test bank questions.

**Practical (psychomotor)** examination skills development shall include at least one skills assessment item correlated to either; each JPR, or each requisite skill area identified in the standard. Each certification directive shall identify the number of skills and the process for the selection of skill assessment items to ensure consistency between certification examinations. The review committee shall review and approve the examination skills for each level of certification.

## Written Examination Review and Analysis

The AFSC shall review test scores and test on a regular basis. The AFSC shall use the following procedures to analyze and take corrective action for special circumstances, or, when it receives a question validation challenge:

1. The AFSC Administrator shall review the question/item for validity and reliability in regards to the appropriate NFPA Standard and reference materials.
2. If the AFSC Administrator is unable to make a clear determination of the test question/item challenged it shall be immediately nullified from the overall score, or removed from any test, and not be used until the issue has been resolved.
3. The AFSC Administrator may then submit the question/item to members of the Test Validation Committee for further review.
4. Following review, the question/item may be:
  - a. Retained as written
  - b. Rewritten
  - c. Permanently removed from the test bank

The AFSC Council Administrator shall review all test statistics and to identify problem questions/areas. The Council Administrator, or designee, shall review each candidate test question comment for comparison with the test questions and reference information. If the determination is that the question is invalid, the AFSC will nullify the question score and will not count it in the final score for the test group. If the determination is that the question is valid, the score shall remain as indicated by the candidate. In cases where is determined there are multiple discrepancies, the Training Officer/Course Coordinator is notified with a written explanation or clarification.

If group scores from a specific course are below average, the AFSC will contact the Training Officer/Course Coordinator for the course and discuss the course content. An entity with multiple candidates that test below minimum scores from greater than three (3) courses must provide a written report detailing the disparity. The report must include a mitigation plan to improve student test scores in future training programs. The Council Administrator will assist in identifying an experienced training program manager to mentor the Training Officer/Course Coordinator and identify areas for improvement.

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The AFSC shall maintain and analyze test statistics including the following:

1. Number of persons taking the test
2. Distribution of test scores
3. Average test score

## Certification Records Maintenance

For certified fire service personnel, a copy of the written answer sheet and practical skills pass/fail for each candidate is stored in individual files located in the AFSC office. If the individual moves out of state or discontinues participation with the fire service, his or her file becomes inactive and secured in accordance with the State of Alaska archive policy. The AFSC keeps certification files in perpetuity. The Fire Standards Council shall maintain a copy of the Course and Testing notification form, any relevant correspondence, all written exam scores, and practical skill pass/fail forms for each accredited course program.

## Certification Appeals Procedure

An individual has the right to appeal the denial of an application for certification, or, any portion of the written or practical examination process. All appeals must be in writing and addressed to the AFSC Administrator within 30 days of the examination or denial notification. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Council Administrator will review the application, certification test information, and dispute detail provided by the applicant. The AFSC Administrator and Executive Board will investigate all written appeals and will provide a written response to the applicant within 30 days of receipt. If the issue is not resolved to the satisfaction of the applicant, then he or she can appeal directly to the AFSC. The Council will review the appeal during its next scheduled meeting and, when reasonable, issue a ruling prior to the close of the meeting.

## Recognition of Previous State of Alaska Certification

The AFSC will recognize previous State of Alaska certifications issued at all levels through the Division of Fire and Life Safety (formerly Division of Fire Prevention). In cases where an individual must meet prerequisite requirements for a level of certification that is currently accredited by IFSAC and/or ProBoard, the individual must have a certificate with an IFSAC or ProBoard seal.

## Grandfather Certification

For individuals that received firefighter certification prior to initial State of Alaska IFSAC or ProBoard accreditation (NFPA 1001, 1997 Edition), the AFSC policy for issuance of "Grandfather" certification with an accreditation seal expired under a sunset clause in 2010. This clause does not prohibit an individual that received certification in Alaska prior to 2001 from receiving an IFSAC or ProBoard seal. Individual seal requests for a certificate issued three or more revisions ago require successful completion of a current written and practical test before issuance of a certificate with a seal.

## Reciprocity

The AFSC offers reciprocity (honored in part) to applicants who have completed his or her certification through an entity accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress ([IFSAC](#)) or the National Fire Service Professional Qualifications Board ([ProBoard](#)). Honored-in-part designates that requisite certification for a given level must be provided and approved before reciprocity is granted (i.e. a Firefighter I request for reciprocity must include a Hazardous Materials Awareness/Operations certificate). Reciprocity applicants must meet local AFSC requirements that are specified within the directive and training record for the requested level of certification, and applicants must meet the residency requirement or be members of a department registered with the [Alaska Division of Fire and Life Safety](#).

An applicant who qualifies for reciprocity is not required to take a practical or written examination. Upon approval of reciprocity requests, the AFSC will issue a State of Alaska certificate only and it will not issue a new

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IFSAC/ProBoard seal. The AFSC cannot not issue reciprocity certifications for levels that the AFSC does not have a certification directive.

Applicants for reciprocity must:

- a. be at least 18 years of age; *and*
- b. be an Alaska resident or member of an organized fire department or an emergency response organization registered with the Division of Fire and Life Safety; *and*
- c. complete an [Application for Certification](#); *and*
- d. provide a photocopy of a driver's license or official photo ID with application; *and*
- e. provide a copy of a valid certificate with an IFSAC or ProBoard seal; *and*
- f. meet the AFSC eligibility requirement for the requested level of certification

Reciprocity certificates issued for Certified Fire Investigator or Fire Service Instructor will have an AFSC renewal date based on the original date of issuance, as defined in the AFSC renewal requirements. For reciprocity applications that have an [IFSAC](#) or [ProBoard](#) certificate with a date of issuance greater than 3 years (CFI) or 5 years (FSI) prior to the application date, the AFSC certificate will issue an initial certificate that will expire on December 31 of the year a reciprocity certificate was granted. Exceptions to this requirement will only be considered if the reciprocity application packet includes a completed renewal packet specific to the level of requested certification.

## Equivalency Challenge

The AFSC designed the Equivalency Challenge process to provide an accredited department a mechanism to conduct a local evaluation of personnel competency in cases where his or her training was completed through a non-approved AFSC course. This process enables personnel affiliated with an AFSC accredited department to become eligible to attend a certification test for levels authorized under its accreditation program in cases where another NFPA correlated training program or course was completed. Under this process an individual is eligible for AFSC testing after the Training Officer/Training Program Manager (TO/TPM) completes a local validation that training has met 100% of the AFSC training record requirements. The Equivalency Challenge *is not* intended to circumvent or bypass core AFSC eligibility requirements under its third-party accreditation requirements with the IFSAC or ProBoard.

To initiate the challenge process, the TO/TPM (or authorized department designee) must submit the documents listed below to the AFSC prior to testing. All Equivalency Challenge requests must be coordinated through the authorized representative on the department that the individual is affiliated with. The TO/TPM or authorized designee is responsible for verifying that the applicant meets all the AFSC requirements for testing. A candidate **is not** permitted to attend a final exam without the explicit pre-approval of the AFSC office *and* the agency that is coordinating the exam site.

The following steps apply to all equivalency challenge requests:

**Step 1:** For each level being challenged the TO/TPM or authorized designee shall:

- a. Review original training documentation to verify each component complies with the AFSC Training Record (documentation must be dated within the last 3 years); *and*
- b. Complete the AFSC Training Record to include the specific dates of knowledge acquisition and local skill validation (*Note, an accredited department is authorized to conduct local training if the individual records are missing core jpr's, or the individual completed the initial training greater than three years ago*); *and*
- c. Submit the following to the AFSC administrative office, via post or email:
  - i. Completed copy of AFSC [Application for Certification](#) that is signed by the TO/TPM or authorized designee
  - ii. Letter of support from the Fire Chief/Designated Supervisor
  - iii. Completed AFSC Training Record for each level requested

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- iv. Written permission to attend an AFSC authorized test site (if testing with another department)

**Step 2:** The AFSC administrative office shall:

- a. Review the equivalency challenge packet for completion; *and*
  - i. Return approved signed copy of AFSC Application for Certification to the TO/TPM; *or*
  - ii. Provide an explanation of rejection to the TO/TPM or authorized designee (the process is held at **Step 2** until the basis for rejection is resolved)
- b. Provide a written approval to the Test Site Coordinator and Certifying Officer assigned to the examination where the individual shall complete the test

**Step 3:** The TO/TPM or authorized designee shall ensure the individual completing the Equivalency Challenge brings the following to the test site:

1. The completed Application for Certification with all required signatures of approval for testing
2. A completed AFSC Training Record for each level of Equivalency Challenge signed by the individual's TO/TPM or authorized designee
3. Official photo ID
4. Personal Protective Equipment/Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, if required for testing
5. Other tools, equipment, or materials necessary to complete the practical exam components

Note that the [AFSC Certification Fee Schedule](#) is applied for test groups below five candidates. If no test opportunity is possible locally, applicants can contact the AFSC Administration for information on other certification test sites.

## Testing Out of Sequence

The AFSC will allow an individual that has attended an approved course for a level of certification that he or she lacks requisite certification level(s) to test at that level if all required training at that level was successfully completed. The following conditions apply to individuals who opt to test out of sequence:

1. All AFSC fees apply and are due at the time of testing in accordance with official payment policy.
2. The AFSC will provide individual test scores to the designated Written Test Contact for the purpose of course evaluation and candidate proficiency only. An entity/individual shall not use the AFSC scores as an indicator of certification completion for a candidate that does not meet prerequisite requirements.
3. Prerequisite certification requirements must be completed (*i.e. AFSC certificate issued*) within one year of the initial test date of the examination level that an individual opts to test out of sequence.
  - a. Example: FF I is taken in Jan. 2015 with no prerequisite of HMO. Individual must obtain HMO certification within the one year grace period which would be before Jan. 2016 to get FF I.
4. If the individual exceed the one year requirement for prerequisite certification she or he must successfully retake the written exam for the certification they are requesting before AFSC certification is issued.
  - a. Example: The individual exceeds the one year grace period and does not obtain HMO by Jan. 2016. Now, they must obtain HMO by Jan. 2018 *and* pass a written retake exam for FF I to get both certifications.
5. If an individual is unable to complete the prerequisites for a level tested out of sequence within three years of course completion, the individual must satisfy the prerequisite certification requirement *and* complete an approved course for eligibility to complete the written and practical examination with the AFSC.
  - a. Example: The individual does not get certified in HMO before Jan. 2018. Now, they must get HMO *and* retake the course and all testing for FF I.

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## LOCAL/IN-STATE ACCREDITATION APPROVAL

### Overview

The AFSC facilitates in-state accreditation approval through joint cooperation with the [Bureau of Fire Accreditation, Standards and Training](#). In-state accreditation is mandatory for all training courses that include a request for the AFSC to administer a certification examination. The steps for in-state accreditation are:

### In State Fire Service Initial Accreditation Approval Process

| <b>Department of Public Safety Unit Responsibility</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | <b>BFAST</b>  | <b>AFSC</b>   |
| 1.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity registers with Division of Fire and Life Safety or submits an <a href="#">Application for Waiver of Registration of Fire Department</a>                          |   |
| 2.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits an <a href="#">Application for Accreditation &amp; Fire Training Course Approval</a> 60 days prior to the beginning of planned course                    |   |
| 3.   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits an <a href="#">Eligibility for Certification Testing Self-Assessment Packet</a> for each level that results in certification testing |
| 4.   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits a <a href="#">Test Notification</a> request 35 days prior to the requested test date(s)  |
| 5.   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC reviews the <a href="#">Eligibility for Certification Testing Self-Assessment Packet</a> for each requested level for initial verification            |
| 6.   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC approves or modifies the requested test date and schedules test site support for certification testing  |
| 7.   | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST reviews the entity <a href="#">Application for Accreditation &amp; Fire Training Course Approval</a> and <a href="#">Training Program Audit Checklist</a> for completion |   |
| 8.   | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST administrative staff conducts an on-site audit/or equivalent review  |   |
| 9.   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC conducts on-site certification testing for requested level(s)   |
| 10.  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC verifies overall group averages are greater than 60% for the requested levels and notifies the BFAST and the requesting entity of final scores        |
| 11.  | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST administrative staff conducts a review for Final Approval  |   |
| 12.  | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST administrative staff provide written accreditation approval to the requesting entity   |   |
| 13.  | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST and AFSC issue an Accreditation Certificate with current levels listed   |   |

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## Adding Additional Levels to Current In-state Accreditation Approval

| Department of Public Safety Unit Responsibility |  |   |
|---|--|---|
|   | BFAST  | AFSC  |
| 1.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity reviews the BFAST <a href="#">Training Program Accreditation Manual</a>   |   |
| 2.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits an <a href="#">Application for Accreditation &amp; Fire Training Course Approval</a> 60 days prior to the beginning of planned course |   |
| 3.  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits an <a href="#">Eligibility for Certification Testing Self-Assessment Packet</a> for each level that results in certification testing |
| 4.  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Requesting entity submits a <a href="#">Test Notification</a> request 35 days prior to the requested test date(s)  |
| 5.  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC reviews the <a href="#">Eligibility for Certification Testing Self-Assessment Packet</a> for each requested level for initial verification            |
| 6.  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC approves or modifies the requested test date and schedules test site support for certification testing  |
| 7.  | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST reviews the entity <a href="#">Application for Accreditation &amp; Fire Training Course Approval</a> for completion                                   |   |
| 8.  | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST conducts an on-site audit/or equivalent review  |   |
| 9.  |  | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC conducts on-site certification testing for requested level(s)   |
| 10.   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> The AFSC verifies overall group averages are greater than 60% for the requested levels and notifies the BFAST and the requesting entity of final scores        |
| 11.   | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST administrative staff conduct a joint review for Final Approval  |   |
| 12.   | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST administrative staff provide written accreditation approval to the requesting entity  |   |
| 13.   | <input type="checkbox"/> The BFAST and AFSC issue an Accreditation Certificate with current levels listed  |   |



# ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL CERTIFICATION POLICY MANUAL

## MISSION AND AUTHORITY OF CERTIFYING OFFICERS

### Overview

The AFSC complies with the test processes as established by the IFSAC and ProBoard. The AFSC requires that Certifying Officers and personnel supporting a certification examination comply with all of the guidelines defined within this Certification Manual.

The AFSC Administration selects Certifying Officers to serve as an agent of the Council in administering examinations. The Certifying Officer is:

1. Responsible for the consistency of AFSC practical and written examinations
2. Empowered to use sound judgment in ensuring that the examination is administered in accordance with applicable standards and regulations
3. The AFSC authorized agent for testing and certification activities at a test site.

### Approval and Authorization of a Certifying Officer

For AFSC approval as a Certifying Officer, an individual must:

- a. Be an AFSC employee approved by the AFSC Administrator, *or*, be a current Fire Service Instructor I, preferably a Fire Service Instructor II (or above), and meet the following criteria:
  1. have a minimum of five years' experience as an active firefighter or instructor; *and*
  2. have completed an AFSC approved Certifying Officer workshop or completed a AFSC approved Certifying Officer seminar; *and*
  3. have successfully completed a CO Exam worksheet with 100% accuracy; *and*
  4. have read this manual in its entirety; *and*
  5. have completed a [Certifying Officer Application](#); *and*
  6. have reviewed and signed the [Certifying Officer Code of Ethics Compliance Agreement](#); *and*
  7. have successfully assisted an AFSC approved Certifying Officer in the administration of two complete examinations (*each pre-approved by the AFSC Council Administrator*):
    - A. one assignment as a CO Trainee assistant observer ([STEP A](#)), *and*
    - B. one assignment as a CO Trainee lead proctored by a current CO ([STEP B](#)); *and*
  8. have been endorsed for Certifying Officer privileges by another CO, *and*
  9. have final written approval of the AFSC Council Administrator.

### Certifying Officer Expiration, Revocation, Suspension, or Denial

Authorization as a Certifying Officer shall automatically cease on the date the individual's Alaska Fire Service Instructor certification expires, except as outlined below.

The AFSC may revoke, suspend, or decline to endorse an individual as a Certifying Officer for the following:

- a. The individual's Fire Service Instructor certification is revoked, suspended, or has expired.
- b. The test examination process changes substantially and requires retraining of the Certifying Officer prior to AFSC endorsement to certify examinations. This suspension and subsequent retraining may be resolved in an informal manner, at the discretion of AFSC Administrator, provided the Certifying Officer has received and confirmed review of the updated material.
- c. The Certifying Officer fails to maintain the security of the written and practical examinations in accordance with applicable regulations, policies, and procedures.
- d. The Certifying Officer has a documented history of interpersonal conflicts with evaluators, candidates, or instructors at examination sites, as indicated within the test evaluation surveys or other written report. At a \*minimum disciplinary measures shall be addressed as follows:
  - **Step 1-** report shall result in verbal counsel

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- **Step 2-** report shall result in written report and coaching/retraining if appropriate and applicable
  - **Step 3-** report shall result in suspension of eligibility until documentation can be review by an Certifying Officer advisory committee
- e. The Certifying Officer has a situation involving gross negligence associated with the performance of his or her duties (Examples of gross negligence can include failure to maintain a safe testing environment, falsifying candidate test records, theft (materials or equipment), copying final exam materials, or permitting candidates to cheat on examinations).

\* *For serious offenses, the AFSC reserves the right to invoke step 3 immediately.*

## AFSC Standard of Conduct

The AFSC has established specific expectations and responsibilities throughout this manual. This section expresses required behaviors in carrying out all functions and demands of a Certifying Officer. Egregious misconduct is grounds for immediate suspension of AFSC Certifying Officer endorsement. Any violation of the standards of conduct shall be subject to discipline, up to and including permanent revocation of AFSC Certifying Officer endorsement. General provisions for the standards of conduct are:

- a. ***Conduct standards apply to all AFSC representatives.*** All of the ethical standards and rules expressed herein are inclusive, and together constitute the standards of conduct by which all representatives of the Fire Standards Council are governed. It shall be the duty of each representative to study and become familiar with the rules, regulations, and operations of the Council, as well as the rules governing control and discipline.
- b. ***Professional standards of behavior apply.*** The standards of conduct set out in this chapter do not recognize every possible act that constitutes unacceptable behavior. Conduct that shocks the conscience or that violates generally recognized standards of professional behavior is forbidden.
- c. ***Reputation and effectiveness of the Fire Standards Council is affected by the conduct of its representative.*** The reputation of the Fire Standards Council is influenced to a large degree by public belief in the integrity of its representatives. Each representative is expected to make a dedicated effort to conduct her or his official duties so that they will inspire the confidence and trust of its constituents. The good conduct and reputation of Fire Standards Council representatives help assure the cooperation and support of the public, other agencies, and the mutual cooperation of all constituents that serves to increase the effectiveness of the Fire Standards Council mission.

## Test Notification Procedure and Schedule

An accredited fire department or emergency response organization is responsible for determining final exam dates following an *approved* course. The AFSC shall determine final exam dates as follows:

1. An accredited entity shall notify the AFSC Administration by submitting a [Test Notification Form](#) at least **35 days PRIOR** to the course **final examination date**.
2. The AFSC Administration will review the proposed test dates to confirm availability and schedule resources. If the AFSC is unable to support the proposed date, administration will consult with the Primary Course Coordinator determine alternate test dates.
3. Upon final approval the AFSC will assign a test number and ensure that the Test Site Coordinator (TCS) receives the necessary support including:
  - a. Authorization and verification of the approved test date
  - b. Testing site preparation instructions
  - c. Verification of mandatory equipment necessary for testing
  - d. Assignment, travel, and accommodation arrangements of Certifying Officer
4. The AFSC will assign a Certifying Officer following the guidelines in this manual.
5. The accredited entity shall provide a response to **the AFSC email sent a minimum of 4 weeks before the final examination** to confirm the test date and number of candidates.
6. The Certifying Officer shall not be from a department that is requesting a certification examination.

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7. Once the AFSC approves the examination, the Test Site Coordinator shall be responsible for notifying test candidates of the final examination date(s).

## Assignment of Certifying Officers for Test Sites

The AFSC administrative staff is responsible for designating a Certifying Officer for each examination. The AFSC shall maintain a list with electronic email addresses of all approved and potential CO trainees for use in selecting CO assignments. The AFSC Administration shall use the following guidelines for assignments:

- a. The AFSC shall initiate Certifying Officer requests for a regional assignment through the CO email notification list. The notice will include the certification level of the test, the location, the scheduled date, and the name of the organization that is testing.
- b. To ensure that all Certifying Officers have an opportunity to preside over an exam, the selection process shall be on a rotation basis. All CO's that contact the AFSC Administration with an acknowledgement of interest shall have their names randomly selected for the assignment, unless a CO has administered an exam within 30 days prior to the notification, or has already accepted an assignment within 30-days of the posted request. Solicitation requests for CO assignments shall remain active for a 72-hour period, unless the exam date is less than 30-days from the notification date.
- c. When a CO has accepted an assignment, his or her name will go to the bottom of the regional list until thirty days after the completion of the assignment. An individual may still be eligible for another assignment within the 30-day period if she or he acknowledges interest and the AFSC receives no other regional CO responses before the closing date of the requested assignment.
- d. The AFSC will send a statewide CO email notification if no regional CO is available. \*Generally, the AFSC will assign the first CO to contact with an acknowledgement of interest unless the CO has administered an exam within 30-days prior to the notification. An individual may still be eligible for another assignment within the 30-day period if she or he acknowledges interest and the AFSC receives no other regional CO responses before the closing date of the requested assignment.
- e. The AFSC must approve a CO to conduct the test at the certification level specified in the notification.
- f. A CO shall not have served as a primary instructor for the course associated with a certification exam assignment.
- g. A CO affiliated with the organization requesting the test is not eligible for the assignment.

\*Due to the large geographic area related to statewide announcements, the AFSC staff reserves the right to select the CO that requires the least travel in cases where it is cost prohibitive to make travel arrangements for other interested CO's.

## Certifying Officer Test Materials

The AFSC provides a CO with all testing and certification materials in advance of the test assignment. Upon receipt of the test tote/test package the first priority of the CO must be to inventory the number of test binders received. The CO should then review the material to ensure that he or she arrives at the test location adequately prepared for the examination. Once on location at the test site, it is the responsibility of the CO to provide the necessary forms and documentation to the candidates. Prior to starting the final examination at the testing site, the Certifying Officer must ensure they have the following items:

- a. Correct number of Written Examination(s) Binders
- b. Blank Answer Sheets for all candidates
- c. Receipt Book
- d. Skill Station outline
- e. Equipment List (also emailed in advance to CO and Training Program Manager/Lead Instructor)
- f. Pencils for candidates

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- g. Blank Skill Sheets for the level of test (one copy per level minimum- check with test site organization for point availability)
- h. Blank Applications for Certification (one copy per candidate- check with test site organization for print availability)
- i. Certifying Officer's Manual
- j. Practical Examination Reporting Form (P/F Form)
- k. Remedial Training Form (for candidates who must retest the practical beyond a third attempt)
- l. Blank Evaluator Code of Ethics and Compliance Agreements
- m. Extra Applications for Certification
- n. Extra Scantron forms

*Note that downloads are available online for items "g-m" above ([www.firestandards.alaska.gov](http://www.firestandards.alaska.gov))*

In cases where the CO arrives at the test site before she or he is able to review the test materials, a CO must take time to examine the contents of the test material packet before beginning the examination instructions. Viewing the materials in advance allows the CO to organize materials and provides an opportunity to verify contents and prepare the materials before addressing a group of candidates. Regardless of the condition of the test packet materials, a CO must always convey a professional attitude in front of the test site candidates.

## **"Off Duty" Certifying Officers**

An individual who has served as a Certifying Officer for other examinations for certification may attend a test site to act in another capacity (e.g. evaluator, skill assistant, etc.), or support others involved in the test process. In such cases, the individual has no authority to function as a Certifying Officer at that site. Any issue related to test security, disputes, etc., are the responsibility of the Certifying Officer that is assigned by the AFSC for that examination site. Although the "Off duty" individual may provide information, suggestions, and/or support to the authorized Certifying Officer, he or she has no authority over the assigned CO.

## **Evaluator and Assistant Training**

Due to the difficulty in providing statewide evaluator training, the AFSC requires that all Evaluators and Assistants attend the evaluator training briefing before each test. This insures that the Evaluators and Assistants have the most current information to observe and assess the candidates. The CO must conduct a briefing at the beginning of each testing session and must include a review of written instructions (in this manual) or the related slideshow module.

# **THE ROLE OF THE CERTIFYING OFFICER**

## **Certifying Officer Core Responsibilities**

The core responsibilities of the Certifying Officer include:

1. Comprehend material within the Certifying Officer's Manual and be knowledgeable with the test policies of the AFSC.
2. Coordinate with the Training Officer, Training Program Manager, or Test Site Coordinator to ensure the candidates experience a fair and consistent test.
3. Ensure candidates have a comfortable test environment.
4. Manage the written and practical testing process throughout an assignment.
5. Provide evaluative feedback to the AFSC after each assignment to assist with improvements to the testing program.

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## Certifying Officer Examination Site Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Certifying Officer at the examination site include:

1. Meet with Evaluators, Assistants, and Test Site Coordinators and distribute materials for conducting tests.
2. Provide all Evaluators and Assistants with the required training and instruction prior to participating in the exam, and ensure Evaluators know their roles and responsibilities as covered in this manual.
3. Ensure that all Evaluators and Assistants have completed and signed a [Certifying Officer Code of Ethics Compliance Agreement](#).
4. Review all skill stations and equipment to ensure they are set up as required and comply with testing instructions. Confirm the equipment at each station is ready and that it will operate correctly and safely.
5. Review each candidate Training Record form and verify the candidate has successfully completed the required training program and that the Training Officer, or designee, has signed the Training Record.
6. Meet and provide instructions to the Candidates using the certification directive and related the testing process (read the script provided in this manual or follow the related slideshow instruction module).
7. Complete the AFSC Test Site Candidate Roster and verify each candidate official ID.
8. Distribute the AFSC [Application for Certification](#) to the candidates and explain the procedure for correctly completing the application.
9. Verify a clear email address for fees that will be invoiced, billed or covered by a Purchase Order. You may also collect the AFSC testing and certification fees as cash or check and provide a receipt for payment as appropriate.
10. Ensure the administration of practical and written examinations is consistent, fair, and safe and follow procedures in this manual and on the skills sheets provided.
11. Administer and collect all examination booklets, scratch paper, grading sheets, and check them for marks and completeness.
12. Ensure that all candidates have completed all paperwork accurately and verify that the candidate information is accurate and correct. *Common errors are the incorrect binder number or incorrect version of the written exam.*
13. Check all applications for completeness. Ensure that the Training Officer or Fire Chief, *and* the Certifying Officer have signed each application.
14. Ensure consistency between all practical stations.
15. Collect and review the practical examination skill sheets and check the candidate pass/fail status as they are completed. Record the candidate's pass/fail/retest status on the [Practical Examination Report Forms](#) (P/F form) and notify the Test Site Coordinator of the status after the candidate has completed an initial attempt at all stations.
16. Ensure that candidates have a different evaluator for all re-tests.
17. Discuss any test site discrepancies with the Test Site Coordinator.
18. Collect all other Certifying Officer materials and use the checklist to return them to the tote. Secure the tote before leaving the test site.
19. Thank the candidates and test site support staff for their time.
20. Return the test materials to the AFSC Administration in accordance with the Security Plan in this manual.

## PREPARING FOR THE TEST SITE EXAMINATION

### Interacting With the Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer

The Test Site Coordinator (TCS) is responsible for obtaining Evaluators/Assistants, obtaining equipment, and preparing the site for the practical examination. The Test Site Coordinator must be at the test site throughout the entire test. The Training Officer/Lead Instructor invests many hours toward the success of her or his students and Certifying Officers may empathize with the site instructor's desire to see his or her students do well. However, the Certifying Officer is the Alaska Fire Standards Council's official representative at the test site, and he or she is responsible for the overall management of the examination process. Although the Training Officer/Lead Instructor have an important role at the test site, the Certifying Officer must remain in control of all aspects of the examination process.

### Selection of Evaluators

The Evaluators for practical examination stations have a significant responsibility, and the selection of competent evaluators is essential to an examination site. The Test Site Coordinator for the scheduled examination site shall identify individuals to serve as Evaluators and Assistants prior to the arrival of the Certifying Officer. The Certifying Officer shall approve individuals to serve as Evaluators and Assistants for individual skill stations. To ensure consistency and fairness throughout testing, the CO should make every attempt to use personnel who can stay for the entire practical examination. It is important that all the people involved in assisting with the skill evaluation process understand their role in the process and possess sufficient maturity to be appropriate and consistent.

The AFSC expects the Certifying Officer and the Test Site Coordinator for a scheduled examination will coordinate the selection and approval of each evaluator. A potential Evaluator must:

1. Have completed the mandatory Evaluator training directive module
2. Be certified at the level they are evaluating
3. Have a history of good judgment and fairness (as determined by the Test Site Coordinator, Training Officer, or designee).

In cases where testing is in a remote location and Evaluator selection is limited, a CO *may* use an individual not certified at the level of the test as an Evaluator. Non-certified individuals must have the appropriate training, experience, and judgment to serve in the capacity of an Evaluator. A CO has the authority to use non-certified personnel if he or she has initialed the waiver on page one of the [Evaluator Code of Ethics Compliance Agreement](#). The Test Site Coordinator can contact the AFSC Administrator prior to the test to discuss the suitability of using uncertified evaluators.

The Certifying Officer must confirm the selected Evaluators have completed the mandatory evaluator training and are certified at/or above the certification level of the exam. Confirmation may include checking a potential Evaluator's certification level with the AFSC or the local fire department training records. All Evaluators must review the Evaluator Code of Ethics form and sign an Evaluator Compliance form before the CO permits assignment to a station.

A CO cannot permit Instructors to act as practical skills Evaluators for the topic she or he instructed during the course.

The Certifying Officer has the final approval as to the appropriateness and inclusion of any proposed Evaluator or Assistant.

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## Selection of Assistants and Helpers

Assistants and Helpers differ from Evaluators because they are generally actively involved in a test station. Assistants may provide direct support to a candidate during scenarios or as needed to prepare a station between scenarios.

The Assistants for practical examination stations are essential to ensure that the candidate can adequately perform the task. The Assistants must review the Evaluator Code of Ethics form and sign an Evaluator Compliance form and be certified at the level being tested. In some cases, an individual that is not certified at the level of the test may be utilized as an assistant, but the individual must have the appropriate training, experience, and judgment to serve in the capacity of an Assistant.

Helpers provide additional support to the test site and differ from Assistants in that they are not generally actively involved in supporting candidates within an evaluation scenario. As such, the Helpers do not need to be certified as they are only providing secondary support to the test site (i.e. resetting stations, cleaning up, staging equipment, etc.).

## Briefing Evaluators

The Certifying Officer must ensure that evaluators understand the grading criteria, time limits, and expectations of the practical station that they will be evaluating. Evaluators must understand that their primary role is that of a "trained observer." **The AFSC prohibits test support personnel from behaving in a manner that reflects personal bias, hidden agendas, and subjectivity within the test stations scenarios. The test candidates are required to meet the practical skill sheet objectives, and evaluator's are not permitted to inject individual opinions or expectations into the station objective.** To prepare test site Evaluators, Certifying Officers must use the standardized evaluator briefing script found later in this manual.

## Briefing Assistants and Helpers

Briefing individuals who may be assisting in the skills is also an important responsibility of the Certifying Officer. The correctness of the examination is ultimately the responsibility of the Certifying Officer. Assistants must be prepared to respond in a correct manner. If assistants are working in multiple stations, they must be consistent between stations and between candidates. Identify and review potential problems or situations before testing begins. If needed, demonstrate acceptable techniques and provide examples of appropriate responses to common mistakes. The assistants should be thoroughly familiar with the items on the practical examination practical skills sheet so they can assist with the evaluation in circumstances where the candidate's actions are in question.

## Basic Equipment and Staffing Requirements

Due to the differences in local equipment and staffing resources, the AFSC Administration has established a minimum list of resources necessary to complete each exam. It is imperative that the Certifying Officer and the Test Site Coordinator communicate test requirements in advance of the test date. Certifying Officers must address the following items before the test begins:

- a. The test site minimum staffing requirements for the AFSC designated practical skill stations are adequate.
- b. The Test Site Coordinator has gathered the appropriate equipment for each skill station and received approval from the Certifying Officer.
- c. Evaluators are briefed on how to set-up and maintain their assigned station and understand that they **may not** add additional equipment to the skill station site.

The goal is to create a good evaluation environment and ensure that all candidates have the same opportunity to complete the exam successfully.

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## Equipment Review

The Certifying Officer will verify that all equipment needed for the practical skill stations are at the stations and the equipment is functioning correctly. The Certifying Officer must verify that all Personal Protective Equipment, firefighting equipment, and apparatus used during testing meet the applicable NFPA standards. The Certifying Office must ensure the station equipment is situated so that the testing process can begin and finish without interruption.

## Duplicating Practical Skill Stations

If a large number of candidates are tested, duplicate practical skill stations could be set up to shorten the amount of time needed for testing. In the interest of consistency, it is important to make the practical stations as identical as possible. The practical examination process requires that all candidates have the same initial testing scenario.

## Rehearsing Practical Skill Stations

The best way to ensure that Evaluators understand the practical skill evaluation sheet and the skill station is to require the successful completion of the [Evaluator Training Instructions](#). It is also important to set up the practical station correctly and to practice it at least once. If time does not permit this, it is essential that the Certifying Officer visit each station prior to the start of the examination to answer any questions from Evaluators or Assistants and verify the station equipment is adequate.

## Verification of Candidate Eligibility for Testing

A candidate must have clear documentation for eligibility to test prior to the arrival of the Certifying Officer. The Training Officer or the Lead Instructor of the locally accredited department or organization will provide the Certifying Officer a list of candidates taking the final examination. The Certifying Officer must verify that there is a completed candidate training record for each candidate and it is on file at the accredited department or organization. This list can be copies of the application for certification, or a roster list of the candidates.

Candidates who are testing with an agency or candidate group outside of his or her jurisdiction must have written approval from the AFSC Administration prior to a test date. Certifying Officers cannot authorize testing for candidates who have not received written approval from the AFSC. Retest candidates who need to retake an exam must also have AFSC written approval prior to eligibility to test at another location. Candidates shall not be permitted to test if they lack the appropriate documentation or do not meet all requirements for final examination.

If the Certifying Officer is presented with a candidate that is **known** to be ineligible for certification (i.e underage or have only partially completed training requirements), and **ineligibility** has been clearly established, the CO **shall not** allow the individual to take the examination for certification. An exception to this policy is the [Testing Out of Sequence](#) policy listed previously in this manual.

## Confidentiality of Examination Results

The Certifying Officer must make every effort to keep the candidates' practical examination results confidential. To maintain confidentiality of a candidate test status, the CO shall not publicly indicate station pass/fail status. The Certifying Officer shall keep all discussion about practical station status and retests between the Training Officer/designee, the Evaluator, and the candidate.

AFSC staff will process written test materials after the CO returns material to the AFSC office. The AFSC shall only release the final certification score results to the candidate and the Primary Course Coordinator (as indicated on the [Test Notification Process](#)).

The AFSC shall ensure that security, storage of testing, certification results, and the associated test instruments are in accordance with the state of Alaska records retention policy.



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## Briefing the Candidates

Briefing the candidates is an important role for the Certifying Officer. Certifying Officers can expect candidate anxiety and must ensure the test is a reasonable and unbiased assessment of individual skills that are consistent with the certification standard. The CO should inform candidates what to expect with test grade timelines, score notification, and re-testing. Certifying Officers should wait until a candidate has completed the first attempt at each station before informing him/her of the practical results. A CO must inform the candidates that they cannot discuss the practical examination or share information with other candidates once the test is underway.

## ADMINISTERING EXAMINATIONS

### Written and Practical Certification Examinations

The Fire Standards Council has developed the skill sheets and a training record for each approved certification level. Each certification directive provides the related guidelines for a given level of certification. The AFSC posts skill sheets and training records for all approved levels of fire service certification online at the [certification webpage](#). Candidates must complete each training component to be eligible for certification testing. The Training Officer, or designee, is required to complete the skill sheets and the training record for the candidates during an approved course. The Certifying Officer must verify that there is documented evidence that each candidate completed the required skills before testing begins.

There are mandatory and random skills stations designated for each level of certification testing. The AFSC staff randomly selects practical skills using the LXR computer software prior to the examination date. Mandatory and random skill sheet selections determine the equipment list that AFSC staff sends via email to the Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer. The AFSC sends the list to the Test Site Coordinator (TSC) to ensure that all materials needed for the exam will be available at the test site. The TSC shall not disclose the contents of the equipment list to any of the candidates testing prior to the day of the exam. The AFSC lists details of the examination skill selections within the last pages of the relevant skills packet.

The CO must coordinate with the TSC to verify all equipment and materials will be available for the test site. In the event that the CO determines the skill sheet cannot be used for the test site (reasons are limited to a lack of equipment/material or inclement weather) the AFSC Administration must be contacted with an explanation of what equipment and material is not available, and why it is not available. An alternative skill from a similar NFPA job performance objective will be randomly selected using the LXR program. The CO or TSC must notify AFSC staff of the inability to supply the necessary equipment by the CO/TSC at least one (1) business day in advance of the practical test.

The AFSC permits the use of a current Emergency Response Guide for written and practical portions of the Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations testing. This policy is only applicable for the hazardous materials component, and does not apply to any other test topics taken within the same setting (i.e. Firefighter I). The use of a dedicated calculator may be permitted in some cases.

The [AFSC certification webpage](#) contains all documentation related to adopted levels of AFSC certification.

## TEST SITE COORDINATOR/TRAINING OFFICER TEST RESPONSIBILITIES

### Advanced Preparation

The \*Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer is responsible for the following items **prior** to the testing process:

1. Submit a [Test Notification](#) at least **35 days PRIOR** to the course **final examination date.**; *and*
2. Arrange a test site location for the initial written and practical examination for all candidates; *and*
3. Complete all training record documentation for each candidate and ensure each candidate is eligible to test; *and*
4. Verify that each candidate has a photocopy of official ID to attach to the AFSC application; *and*
5. Ensure that potential Evaluators are available during the examination period; *and*
6. Communicate with the designated Certifying Officer in advance of the test date to plan the written and practical certification examination

### Test Date Preparation

For all test sites, during the day of the examination the Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer has the responsibility to:

1. Provide an adequate site for the examination;
2. Provide assistance to the Certifying Officer;
3. Ensure that candidates have the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment that meets or exceeds the applicable NFPA standard;
4. Obtain sufficiently trained and qualified Evaluators for the practical skills testing;
5. Obtain sufficiently trained and qualified Assistants for the practical skills testing;
6. Ensure that all necessary equipment, apparatus, and supplies are at the test site, and that all items meet or exceed all applicable NFPA and health and safety standards; and
7. Set-up practical examination skill stations.

In certain cases, the Lead Instructor may assume the responsibilities of the Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer. At a minimum, the organization that submitted the Course Test Notification will designate an officer or responsible individual to coordinate the duties of the Training Officer as defined above.

Unless the Test Site Coordinator/Training Officer has made prior arrangements with the AFSC Administration and the Certifying Officer, he or she must be present at the test site for the entire examination. Failure of the Training Officer to provide support during the examination process could result in restrictions or revocation of training accreditation.

### Designated Safety Officer

The testing agency has the ultimate responsibility for the safety of all parties involved in the testing process. The testing agency shall assign a Safety Officer from the local support staff or from the available members of the fire department who are not testing. This Safety Officer should be an individual with sufficient training and experience to determine potential safety problems and take corrective action. The Safety Officer shall operate in a roving fashion to ensure that candidates and Evaluators conduct evolutions in a safe manner. The Safety Officer has the authority, regardless of rank, to stop any activity immediately if she or he observes a dangerous condition or act.

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## Live Fire Skill Assessment

Some firefighter skills contain objectives that involve fire control JPR's. For completion of certification exam elements, candidates can simulate most fire control elements. Each skill sheet will identify the requirement for completion of the skill station and specify if simulation is permissible. Any live fire skill that is conducted during the certification exam portion must comply with NFPA 1403; *Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions (2012)*.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATION BASIC OVERVIEW

### Administering the Written Examination

A Certifying Officer is responsible for administering the written examination and shall:

1. Ensure that candidates are in a comfortable environment for completing the written examination.
2. Separate candidates to ensure test integrity and verify extraneous materials are removed from the tabletops (in certain cases the use of a dedicated calculator may be permitted).
3. **Follow** the written exam instructions specified in this manual (either the written script or the companion slideshow instructions).
4. Distribute the test binders and instruct candidates to complete the top of the application form (verify the name and test code information is completed as per the instructions)
5. Direct candidates to read each question and answer every question.
6. Tell candidates when to begin the examination.
7. Remain in the room, or designate another authorized individual to remain in the room, to ensure the security of the examination.
8. As candidates complete the examination, collect the materials. **Ensure** the candidate did not mark the examination booklet.
9. Confirm the number of the test binder and the version of the test are accurately marked on the Scantron answer sheet.
10. Secure the exam binders and collect all remaining testing materials when all candidates have completed the examination.
11. If a candidate writes on any document or paper during the exam the CO must collect it with the application and answer sheet and attached to the individual packet.

### Oral Examination Requests

For a candidate that may have difficulty reading a written examination, the AFSC *may* pre-approve arrangements to have the written exam verbally read to the candidate. The entity requesting oral administration must provide the following in writing:

1. a request for oral administration
2. documentation related to the individual disability associated with the request (see [ADA Policy](#))
3. the number of candidates under the request
4. confirmation that there is a discreet area that will allow the privacy to the candidate and will not disrupt other examination candidates
5. the name and community role/position (i.e. librarian, pastor, teacher) of an individual that is available to Proctor an oral examination (an individual that *is not* affiliated with the fire service or certified at the level of the exam being administered)

The AFSC Council Administrator must approve the request in writing prior to the date of the examination. The Test Site Coordinator has the responsibility to ensure the Certifying Officer is aware of the request prior his or her arrival at the test site.

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## Written Retest

Candidates that do not successfully complete the written exam must schedule a retest with the AFSC. Generally, the Training Officer or Lead Instructor will receive notification of test results. Contact with the AFSC with the individual's intent to retest is recommended within 30-days of receipt of the test results. This notification shall include documentation for authorization to retest at a pre-approved location. Approved retest sites include the AFSC main office or an alternate location pre-approved by the AFSC. In cases where an individual requires a retest but cannot physically travel to a regional test site, the AFSC will attempt to locate a Proctor in the candidate's region. To ensure consistency the AFSC will attempt to designate a Certifying Officer to serve as a Proctor when possible.

After three total attempts to pass the written exam, the request for additional examinations must be in writing and must include a letter from the Training Officer or the Fire Chief describing additional remedial training completed to assist the candidate. If a candidate fails a fourth written examination the AFSC administration will review additional retests requests on a case-by-case basis, and the AFSC recommends that the candidate complete the entire training course.

## Written Test Proctor

In the event that an individual requires the administration of a written examination in a community that does not have a Certifying Officer available, the AFSC may authorize a designated individual that can administer the examination. A designated Proctor cannot be the primary instructor that trained the individual at the level of the certification examination. For Proctor requests, the AFSC Council Administrator must specifically authorize the individual to Proctor the exam.

Authorized Test Proctors represent the AFSC office in the administration of a written certification exam. It is the Test Proctor responsibility to follow test confidentiality protocols in accordance with AFSC policy and procedures. Response to the Proctor Instruction Authorization email serves as confirmation that only the candidate shall open the sealed test envelope, and that the candidate shall return all test material to the secondary envelope provided and sealed it without permitting the Proctor or anyone else from viewing the certification examination. Proctored exams will not be sent out until email verification of receipt of the above instructions has been received.

Proctored candidates shall review and sign the Proctored Candidate Test Authorization form for confirmation that he or she opened the sealed test envelope and returned all test material to the secondary envelope provided and sealed it without permitting anyone to review the certification examination.

The AFSC shall use the following guidelines for authorized Proctored examinations:

1. The candidate must meet all requisite requirements for the requested level of exam.
2. The AFSC shall review a completed application and supplemental documentation as appropriate to determine eligibility prior to authorizing a Proctored exam.
3. Upon approval the Proctor examination material shall be prepared and mailed by AFSC staff in a shipping package that includes:
  - a. Proctor instruction authorization form
  - b. Student Roster with Proctor Signature
  - c. Candidate Sealed Certification Examination Packet to include:
    - i. Candidate Test Authorization Form
    - ii. Completed Scantron (bubble) form
    - iii. Certification examination
    - iv. Copy of Original Application
    - v. Exam Instruction Page
    - vi. Supplements (MSDS, Placard, or other references; IF APPLICABLE)
    - vii. Form of Payment (if applicable)

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- viii. Individual Test Packet Return Checklist
  - d. Proctor return checklist
  - e. Self-addressed return envelope
  - f. Return shipping instructions
2. The sealed test envelope seal **shall not be opened by the Test Proctor** before the test begins
3. The **TEST CANDIDATE** shall open the sealed test envelope when the test begins
4. Upon completion, the **TEST CANDIDATE** shall return all test materials to the secondary envelope included with the packet (see items i-viii).
5. The **TEST CANDIDATE** shall reseal the return test envelope and sign across the gum-line
6. The test Proctor shall use the return envelope to return all items to the AFSC Administration immediately through an approved shipping method (see [Test Examination Security Plan](#))

## PRACTICAL EXAMINATION INSTRUCTION

### Administering the Practical Examination

A Certifying Officer is responsible for administering the practical examination and must:

1. Ensure that the candidates are physically ready to take the exam (i.e. not injured, ill, or otherwise incapacitated).
2. Verify that all examination stations have the correct equipment and/or supplies.
3. Complete the Evaluator and Assistant training briefing and obtain Evaluator Code of Ethics Compliance Form signatures
4. **Follow** the practical exam instructions specified in this manual (either the written script or the companion slideshow instructions).
5. Ensure candidates and evaluators maintain personal safety awareness and follow appropriate safety measures within each skill station and (*the Certifying Officer may alter, suspend, or terminate any operation they determine as unsafe*).
6. Begin the practical examination process.
7. Ensure that Evaluators receive a practical station skill check sheets for each candidate.
8. Ensure all skill stations are consistent for each candidate.
9. Ensure assignment of alternate evaluators to evaluate any candidate that requires a retest.
10. Complete the required practical examination documentation and secure with application and written examination paperwork.

### Candidate Competency at Practical Examination Sites

The intent of practical examinations for certification is to determine whether a candidate is competent in the requisite skill requirement as identified within the certification standard. The expectation is that candidates have training and are competent in the required skills prior to the test site. The AFSC prohibits candidates from practical training at the test site once the test examination process begins.

Each candidate must be prepared to take all portions of the examinations for certification prior to the start of the examination. It is not permissible for a candidate to delay or opt out of a practical examination station for any reason other than injury or sudden on-set of illness. The AFSC prohibits a candidate from discussing the contents of the practical examination with other candidates once the examination process begins.

### Facial Hair in Contact with SCBA Prohibited

It is not permissible for individuals with facial hair that contacts the SCBA facepiece seal to test for certification. The Certifying Officer will have the authority to deny testing to these individuals. Any Certifying Officer, Evaluator, or Assistant wearing SCBA while participating in any practical skill that has the potential for a

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hazardous atmosphere shall also comply with this requirement. This policy is in accordance with NFPA 1500, Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs, 2013 Edition:

*"7.14.3\* Members who have a beard or facial hair at any point where the facepiece is designed to seal with the face or whose hair could interfere with the operation of the unit shall not be permitted to use respiratory protection at emergency incidents or in hazardous or potentially hazardous atmospheres."*

### **Practical Examination Retesting**

Candidates that are testing for practical skill examinations must demonstrate competency in accordance with the Fire Standards Council requirements. Candidate scoring for practical examinations are Pass or Fail. A candidate that is unsuccessful in a skill station will not generally receive specific detail of failure points, the CO will indicate to the candidate the general subject area deficiency. If a candidate misses or fails any step listed on a skill sheet, the candidate is required to retest all listed task steps.

Candidates may attempt the skill or evolution retest two additional times after the initial attempt (three total attempts). If a candidate is unable to demonstrate the skill competency within three attempts, she or he must receive remedial training before attempting the skill again. In most cases, a candidate that requires more than three attempts to complete the same skill will be required to reattempt testing on another date at another test site.

The Certifying Officer, the Training Officer, and/or the Lead Instructor will meet after a candidate's third unsuccessful attempt to determine the remedial action necessary to prepare the candidate for another skill evaluation. The Certifying Officer has discretionary authority to determine an appropriate course of action for remediation and retest alternatives, or, the Certifying Officer can contact AFSC Council Administrator for a directive regarding this issue.

A candidate who requires remedial training must receive this training from an AFSC certified Fire Service Instructor. The AFSC does not permit remedial training at a test site practical skills examination station. An instructor must document all required remedial training on a [Remedial Training Form](#).

### **Remedial Training Form**

The Certifying Officer must complete the [Remedial Training Form](#) when a candidate cannot demonstrate skill competency in accordance with established job performance requirements for the level that he or she is testing. Completion of this form is required if the candidate is unable to successfully complete the same practical skill station within three attempts. Remedial training is required if a candidate cannot demonstrate skill competency in accordance with established job performance requirements during the final skill evaluation. The Certifying Officer will indicate the specific skills the candidate must have remedial training on before it is permissible for the candidate to retest.

A certified Fire Service Instructor that is not directly involved with the testing and evaluation process in which the candidate initially tested must conduct remedial training. Instructors may include the course instructor or another outside instructor if they are not providing direct support to the test site process. The burden is on the candidate to obtain the required remedial training and is responsible for returning this form to the AFSC Administration. There is no minimum or maximum number of hours for remedial training. The candidate has 12-months following successful course completion to obtain the remedial training and successfully complete the practical examinations.

Remedial training **cannot** be conducted by the Certifying Officer or a test site Evaluator. The Fire Service Instructor who provides remedial training must verify by signature that the candidate is capable of competently demonstrating skill competency in accordance with established job performance requirements for the level of certification at which the candidate is testing. If the applicant declines retesting, or is unable to retest during his or

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her initial practical test, the Certifying Officer shall record this information on the Remedial Training Form and forward a copy to the AFSC Administration.

Due to the nature of the station selection for each certification examination, a candidate that retests at a different test site is required to demonstrate skill competency for all of the stations selected for the alternate location. It is possible that a candidate will perform different skill stations at the alternate test site that do not include the station the candidate did not successfully complete during his or her initial test. However, the candidate must show proof of remedial training before beginning a new practical examination process. Once the candidate successfully completes an approved retest, a Certifying Officer must sign the Remedial Training Form and return it to the AFSC Administration.

## Practical Examination Record Keeping

Certifying Officers must maintain thorough records at a practical examination site. Incomplete or improper documentation creates the potential for administrative errors, and the AFSC Administration cannot issue certification in cases where documentation is inadequate.

Candidates are required to competently complete the skills stations selected for a given test site. The AFSC requires the Certifying Officer to document the results of final skill examinations on the [Practical Examination Report Forms](#). Although each candidate must have a skill sheet for each examination station, the Certifying Officer is only required to *review* the completed skill sheets and mark the candidate accordingly on the Practical Skills Examination Form; *the CO is not required to submit individual skill sheets with the return test packet*. The completed skill sheets are left with the TSC/TO for local record keeping.

In cases where an individual is unsuccessful completing a required skill station, the Certifying Officer must follow the remedial training procedure and record the results on the [Remedial Training Form](#).

## Practical Skills Examination Reporting Form (Used for Entire Test Group)

Use of [Practical Examination Report Forms](#) are to record the results of each candidate at the test site. It is helpful to list the candidates by last name, in alphabetical order. The CO must clearly note the outcome for each candidate on the form. A CO must include a completed [Practical Examination Report Forms](#) with the returned test packet documentation.

## Returning Examination Booklets and Materials

The Certifying Officer shall be responsible for returning all final examination materials after the testing session. The AFSC explicitly prohibits all personnel from copying any portion of certification examination. All test items must ship in accordance with AFSC policies for test materials. Test items must ship through a means that allows materials to be traced (Goldstreak, Fed-Ex, USPS).

The Certifying Officer must return the following items to AFSC after each exam:

1. Test Binders
2. Completed signed [Application for Certification](#)
3. Completed & signed Test Site Student Roster
4. Completed Scantron answer sheets
5. Completed Hazardous Materials skill sheet and template copies (*if applicable*)
6. Completed [Test Site Candidate Roster](#)
7. Completed [Evaluator Code of Ethics Compliance Agreement](#)
8. Completed [Practical Examination Report Forms](#)
9. Completed [Certifying Officer Exam Return Report](#)
10. Completed [Certifying Officer Exam Site Survey](#)
11. Completed [Contractor Pay Documentation Form](#)
12. Completed [Test Site Coordinator Exam Site Survey](#)

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13. All other material listed on the tote checklist sent by AFSC staff

## EXAMINATION PROCESSING AND NOTIFICATION

### Scoring

The AFSC will attempt to score exams within 5-business days from the day of receipt. During peak periods, test results may not be available for up to 30-days. For group examinations, the AFSC sends the candidate scores to the designated Written Test Contact specified by the requesting entity. The designated Written Test Contact has the responsibility to distribute individual test scores to candidates.

Evaluations of practical skill are on a pass/fail basis with all mandatory components identified. A candidate must successfully complete all AFSC designated stations during the examination of the overall skill component of an examination level. The CO will provide each candidate with practical exam results (*Pass/Fail*) on the date of the practical examination.

The AFSC administration processes all written exams scores using LXR Scantron software. The AFSC duplicates the scoring of written examinations for each test group to ensure score accuracy. The student must pass the written exam with a score of 70% or higher, unless otherwise specified. Upon completion of the grading process, the AFSC sends the candidate scores to the designated Written Test Contact.

Under the [Testing Out of Sequence](#) option the release of candidate scores shall include a statement in cases where certification pre-requisites are incomplete. Final certification issuance is withheld until all pre-requisite requirements are achieved and AFSC test fees are paid.

### Payment Processing

The AFSC generates an invoice upon receipt of all applications. The AFSC sends invoices to the address (email or physical) provided by the applicant on an application. Once the AFSC receives payment for an application it is queued for additional processing. The AFSC issues certification to individuals with complete applications within 30-days of payment. The AFSC does not issue certification until receipt of test fees.

For test group of less than 5 candidates direct expenses will be invoiced in lieu of individual test fees if the direct expenses are more that the cost of the test fees. In addition to the direct expenses such as CO fees, travel, parking, shipping and per diem, there will be an additional 20% for administrative costs.

### Certification Notification Procedures

Upon certification issuance the AFSC shall immediately email an electronic notification to each candidate with instructions on accessing an electronic certificate. The candidate is responsible for providing a copy of the certificate to his or her organization. The AFSC will maintain a copy of the certificate in the individuals' certification file in the main office. For group examinations the entity's designated training record manager will receive an email notification when a department member is issued an AFSC certification.

### Summary

The CO must endeavor to provide timely and accurate documentation for a test site assignment. Rapid submission of test site paperwork is mandatory and ensures test security and prompt grading of candidate examinations.



## TEST EXAMINATION SECURITY PLAN

Each examination requires significant resources to be successful. The Fire Standards Council maintains a high level of security for examinations, and it will take immediate action against individuals or agencies that misuse the certification examination process. If members of an organization exhibit a gross violation of this policy, disciplinary action may be taken up to and including a loss of individual certification, loss of fire department accreditation and cost recovery associated with conducting the test. The security of the examination is the responsibility of every individual involved in the testing process.

### General Security Points

1. The CO or authorized test Proctor must clearly label returned examination packages with legible shipping and return addresses. The term "Examinations" is meant to include all written and practical testing materials, and includes:
  - a. test binders
  - b. completed answer sheets
  - c. practical examination result forms
  - d. completed applications
  - e. evaluator compliance forms
  - f. other associated paperwork (i.e. payment, remedial training forms, CO pay documents, Haz mat skill sheets)
2. Examinations shall only be shipped by methods that provide shipment tracking (e.g., Gold Streak, Airfreight, Federal Express, \*USPS Mail, etc)  
*\*Individuals returning examinations through the USPS must use the **Certified Mail** option*
3. All examinations not in the direct view of a Certifying Officer/Review Committee member must be stored in a secure location, such as the locked case provided, a locked filing cabinet, locked car trunk, etc.
4. The AFSC reserves the right to determine what individual or agency can receive test examination materials.
5. All return packets must include a completed return Checklist (i.e. CO Exam Return Report or an AFSC Test Bank Report)

### Distribution of Examinations

1. The AFSC explicitly prohibits copying any certification examination.
2. The AFSC shall mail authorized test site examinations to assigned Certifying Officer's, or a designated secure pickup location, as deemed appropriate by the AFSC staff.
3. In the event that a CO or authorized test Proctor must administer a written examination to an individual in a community that does not have a Certifying Officer available, a designated individual shall be authorized to administer the examination as described previously under the [Written Test Proctor](#) procedure.

### During the Testing Process

1. The CO or authorized test Proctor must be physically present throughout the administration of the written examination.
2. The AFSC prohibits the CO or authorized test Proctor from reviewing the written examination with anyone.
3. The Certifying Officer must discuss examination security with the practical examination evaluators prior to administration of the practical examination.
  - a. Provide detailed instructions to evaluators and candidates to ensure that candidates are not allowed to see the practical skills stations prior to his or her test
  - b. Determine how you will segregate candidates that have completed a specific practical skill station from other candidates that have not completed that specific skill station. This may require several

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segregated candidate staging areas away from the test stations. In cases where multiple staging areas are not available, the CO or designee must remain in the staging area to ensure candidates do not discuss skill stations with each other.

4. If an approved Scantron answer form is unavailable for a written examination, a candidate may record the answers on a standard sheet of paper for return to AFSC Administration. AFSC staff will transcribe candidate answers onto a Scantron form and check for accuracy before scoring. The AFSC will retain this form with the Scantron answer sheet.

## Missing Examinations

Upon receipt of test tote material, the CO must inventory examination binder totals. If a Certifying Officer determines that an assigned examination is missing from her or his assigned test site, the CO must contact the AFSC Administrative staff immediately and provide the following information in writing:

1. a description of the missing material(s);
2. the last known location;
3. a description of the attempts made to locate the examination; and
4. a recommendation for additional action.

If an individual other than the Certifying Officer is responsible for the missing examination, they must send a separate letter to the AFSC Administrator detailing the circumstances under which the examination was lost. The AFSC Administrator, or designee, will investigate the circumstances surrounding the loss of the exam. If disciplinary measures are required, the AFSC Council Administrator and Executive Board will address these at the conclusion of an investigative review. In such cases, the AFSC Council Administrator may implement disciplinary action up to and including: a loss of individual certification, loss of fire department accreditation, and cost recovery associated with conducting the test.

## Breaches of Security

Breaches of security or any compromise of the examination process is a serious situation. If an individual suspects an examination has been compromised, the AFSC Council Administrator must be contacted by phone, by the Certifying Officer, or designee, that is responsible for the examination, as soon as practical after any breach of test security.

If a breach of test security occurs, the individual responsible for the examination should provide a written statement containing:

1. a description of the security breach;
2. a list of individuals involved in the breach; and
3. other information the individual considers appropriate.

Written statements from persons with knowledge of the event should accompany the letter, if available.

The AFSC expects that the Certifying Officer or individual responsible for the examination will perform an initial assessment of the breach of security to obtain information that may not be available later. The AFSC ultimately holds the responsibility for investigation, but the individual responsible for the examination must provide a detailed examination of the events in writing.

The AFSC Administrator, or designee, will investigate the circumstances surrounding the loss of the exam. If disciplinary measures are required, the AFSC Administrator and Executive Board will address these at the conclusion of an investigative review. In such cases, the AFSC Administrator may implement disciplinary action

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up to and including: a loss of individual certification, loss of fire department accreditation, and cost recovery associated with conducting the test.

## TEST SECURITY POLICY

### Test Materials Access and Storage Policy

Access to the written exams, test banks and computer system containing any relevant information are restricted to the AFSC administrative staff. Administrative staff issues the tests for a certification exam and sends them to the Certifying Officer in a locked case. The Administrative staff gives the lock combination directly to the Certifying Officer. The Certification Officer signs a compliance agreement ensuring the maintenance of test security.

The AFSC maintains the written exam test banks software disks and hard copies of the exam in secure file cabinets in the AFSC main office. The AFSC administrative staff shall have the only keys to these file cabinets. The AFSC maintains written exam test banks on a secure computer network. The AFSC administrative staff are the only persons with knowledge of the password to this system.

### Review Committee Test Security Policy

During test item development, validation, and review all examination material the AFSC shall distribute materials in accordance with methods listed under "General Security Points." The AFSC prohibits copying or reproducing test material in any manner without the express written permission of the AFSC Council Administrator or designee. The AFSC does not permit copying or reproducing of copyright material or other related illegal activities. The AFSC prohibits designated committee members from sharing or viewing material with individuals outside of the designated committee, and the committee members must not share any information construed as revealing or identifying confidential test information with the public. All test bank material is confidential and must be under constant control while under committee review. Committee members shall return all materials to the Council Administrator of the AFSC, or designated administrative staff, by the established deadline.

### Test Materials Disposal Policy

The AFSC shreds outdated written exam materials before disposal and destroys computer disks by breaking or shredding the disks. The Department of Public Safety IT staff shall wipe all computer systems use for storage of test bank material before disposal.

## APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### Application Detail

To assist the AFSC staff in processing an [Application for Certification](#) it is extremely important that candidates complete them correctly and legibly. The applicant/candidate may overlook the following items and the Certifying Officers must ensure correct completion.

1. Select the correct "Application Type." Candidates that are testing after completing a course should select the "New" box.
2. For "Application Level," check each box that applies to the test that the candidate is taking. For Firefighter exams, the Hazardous Materials component is often conducted simultaneously, and both the Firefighter and Haz Mat box is checked for the appropriate level
3. Under "Personal Information:" note the following
  - a. an email is required to process certification

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- b. the ID number is composed of the first three (3) letters of the candidate's **last name** and the **last four numbers** of the candidate's social security number  
NOTE: In the case of a name change the applicant must provide the following
  - State/Government identification with the changes AND
  - Proof of previous name, i.e. marriage license, divorce decree or other legal documentation
- c. For firefighter I and II levels the candidate must check the box to receive a collar pin
4. The "Personal Information," and "Department or Employer Information" portion on the first page must be completed and legible.
5. Review the certification requirements as identified on the second page. Verify documentation as required.
6. Ensure the applicant/candidate meets the minimum age requirement (18 for FFI and 21 for FSI).
7. Ensure the applicant/candidate meets the three years of fire service experience as required for Fire Service Instructor I.
8. Verify the candidate's official ID on the Test Site Student Roster. For new applications sent directly to the AFSC a legible copy of the ID must be attached to the application.
9. All signatures must be on the application for final processing.
  - a. Applicant must sign
  - b. Training Officer or Fire Chief must sign (this indicates that the person has completed the required training program)
  - c. Certifying Officer must sign (this indicates that the final examination has been administered and completed).
10. Place applications in the return packet with the written examination answer sheet.
11. For all recertification, the required documentation must be completed and attached.

### Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid Requirements for Firefighter I

A valid CPR credential includes any one of the following: a CPR card; completed course rosters; or a letter from a certified CPR Instructor attesting to the applicant's successful completion of a CPR program. The card or letter must clearly indicate that the course included adult, child, and infant CPR and airway obstruction relief maneuvers, including two-rescuer CPR and barrier devices. The following CPR credentials are acceptable for **Firefighter I** certification.

- a. BLS for Health Care Providers-**American Heart Association**
- b. CPR for the Professional Rescuer-**American Red Cross**
- c. The CPR component of Medic First Aid-Advanced
- d. Basic Life Support for Professionals (BLSPRO)-**EMP America**
- e. CPR for the Professional Rescuer-**American Safety & Health Institute**
- f. Respond Systems AED/CPR
- g. AAOS Emergency Care and Safety Institute-**Professional Rescuer CPR**
- h. Emergency First Response CPR & AED
- i. Military Training Network

Programs that do not include ***all*** of the necessary components or that offer a card valid for greater than two years do ***not*** meet the CPR requirements for Firefighter I certification. Requirements for CPR certification and training are specified in 7 AAC 26.985 (d) of the Alaska EMS Regulations.

As per the Fire Department Accreditation guidelines, the local Training Officer has the responsibility to ensure that the medical care training program (i.e. ETT, EMT, or other in-house training) meets the NFPA 1001 (4.3) minimum for infection control, bleeding control, and shock management.

### Prerequisite Requirements

When a standard (or a level within a standard) states that prerequisite certification is required a candidate must complete prerequisite before the AFSC issues certification for the higher level of certification (see page 13 under the "[Testing Out of Sequence](#)" section). The AFSC shall differentiate prerequisite certification examination

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questions in the exam process and score these independently. The AFSC shall issue or identify prerequisite certification levels. Each AFSC certification level shall identify prerequisite requirements specific to the related certification directive and training record.

## Applicants from Out-of-State

The AFSC will not certify applicants/candidates that have not met the 30-day residency requirement. Confirmation of the residency requirement includes a copy of an Alaska driver's license or a letter from an individual other than the applicant/candidate stating that the applicant has lived in Alaska for at least 30-days. The AFSC will waive the residency requirement for an applicant that is a member of a fire department registered with the State Fire Marshal's Office.

## Underage Applicants

A candidate who is less than 18 years of age cannot complete a certification exam at any level. Individual departments may decide whether the underage applicant may attend the training sessions, but the AFSC prohibits the underage candidate from testing until after her or his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Applicants with Criminal History

The AFSC has not adopted a specific set of policies for processing applicants at the FFI, FFII, or Instructor I and II Level with a record of criminal history. The AFSC recommends that the local AHJ adhere to department policy regarding criminal history background checks.

The AFSC is the AHJ for criminal history background checks for certified Fire Investigators. An individual must submit 2 (two) fingerprint cards processed by an approved service ([click for Approved Finger Printers](#)) with application for certification as a Fire Investigator.

The Certifying Officer must contact the AFSC Council Administrator immediately if he or she becomes aware of a significant criminal background issue regarding an applicant. The AFSC Council Administrator and Executive Board will follow guidelines established by the AFSC to determine if the criminal background issue is significant or relevant to the level of certification the applicant is seeking.

## WRITTEN EXAMINATION INSTRUCTIONS

### Certifying Officer Instructions

**AS THE DESIGNATED ADMINISTRATOR OF THIS EXAMINATION, YOU ARE REQUIRED TO COMPLY WITH THE ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL TESTING POLICIES. SECURITY OF THIS EXAM IS CRUCIAL TO THE STATEWIDE CERTIFICATION PROCESS. AS AN AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ALASKA FIRE STANDARDS COUNCIL, THE AFSC EXPECTS YOU TO MAINTAIN THE SECURITY OF THIS EXAM. PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTERING THIS EXAMINATION ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

1. Assemble the candidates taking the test in a quiet location that is appropriate for conducting the examination. Candidates must remove all reference books and materials from the candidate's desk. Candidates may use dedicated calculators (no electronic devices such as Smart Phones, PDA's, etc.), scratch paper and other tools as necessary. The Certifying Officer should ensure the candidates understand what items they may or may not use.
2. The AFSC prohibits candidates from removing any copies of the examination from the testing location.
3. Each candidate should have a test binder that includes; an application for certification, testing instructions, an examination booklet, a bubble style answer sheet and two (2) No. 2 lead pencils. Writing

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in or on the examination booklet is prohibited. The answer sheet shall be prepared and completed in accordance with the test binder instructions.

4. It is mandatory that the CO read the test instructions to candidates before each test.
5. At the completion of the examination the CO must collect and account for all test binders, applications, answer sheets, and scratch paper. The CO must return all examination contents to the AFSC along with any practical examination documents that the candidate has completed. Do not fold Scantron answer sheets.

*(These instructions are included with each mailed written examination)*

If candidates are on-call during the administration of the exam and an emergency arises that warrants a response by candidates:

- a. Test booklets and answer sheets must be turned face down.
- b. Test will continue when students return.
- c. If emergency is of long duration:
  - i. \*The incomplete test is invalid.
  - ii. The AFSC will reschedule the exam.
  - iii. The AFSC will issue a different version of the test.

\* *The test will not count against the number of total attempts by the candidate.*

At no time shall the CO leave the examination binders unattended.

### Verbal Instructions for Written Exam

The CO is required to read these instructions at the start of the written exam. As an alternative to this script, the AFSC has a slideshow presentation that may be used in place of this Verbal Instructions section.

1. Welcome to the practical examination. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am the Certifying Officer for this examination.
2. The written examination will begin shortly.
  - Please remove **all** material from your desk.
  - Silence and put away your cell phone.
  - You are not to open the test binder until I give you instructions to do so.
  - There is a \_\_\_\_\_ hour time limit for this examination. (1 hour per 50 questions)
  - Location of exits \_\_\_\_\_
  - Location of restrooms \_\_\_\_\_
  - In case of Emergency –place test materials back in the binder and close before exiting the building.
3. During the examination, you may not leave the room except to use the restroom; I will only permit one candidate to leave at a time. If you need to leave the room, please raise your hand and I will dismiss you. I am required to suspend the privilege if it is abused. If you leave place testing materials back in the binder and close the binder.
4. The AFSC does not permit me to answer any questions about individual examination items.
5. Any irregularities connected with this examination, such as giving or obtaining assistance to another applicant, may be sufficient cause to terminate your participation in taking the examination and/or gaining certification. In such cases, the State of Alaska reserves the right to delay processing of examination results until the AFSC conducts a thorough and complete investigation.
6. You must not copy any material from the examination or make any recordings of this examination at any time or in any way. The AFSC prohibits efforts to reconstruct the examination using your memory or that

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of others. You are not permitted to duplicate any questions in writing and should report evidence of this activity to the AFSC Council Administrator.

7. It is not permissible to use computers or other electronic devices during the examination. However, the AFSC allows the use of dedicated calculators only (**NO** smart phones, PDA, or other handheld electronic devices for use on the AFSC written examination for certification.)
8. After finishing the examination, you may leave the room. Be sure you complete the answer sheet and return all examination materials given to you, including the examination booklet, scratch paper, answer sheet, and any borrowed pencils.
9. Before we begin the examination, you must complete a few items on the bubble answer sheet.
  - ID Number – Use the candidate’s last four numbers of the social security number, complete boxes and ovals
  - Version Number – The exam version number is located in the upper, right hand corner of the exam or on the red page at the front of your binder. Enter the version number directly after the ID number (see example in exam binder).
  - Last Name -- Last name by letter, complete boxes and ovals
  - FI & MI -- First and Middle initial by letter, complete boxes and ovals
  - Date -- Month, Day and Year by number, complete boxes and ovals
  - Grade Box – Enter the binder number of the test (found on the front cover of the exam binder). Please enter a zero first if the binder only has a single digit listed on it. Example, for binder 1 you would record 01.

Complete the Additional Data box as follows:

- Course – enter the name of the course
- Test – (name of exam) Firefighter I, Firefighter II, Instructor I, etc.
- Date – the date of the test
- Instructor – course instructor’s name
- Your Name – the student’s name
- Blank – the certifying officer’s name

10. While completing the answer sheet remember the following critical items:
  - Mark each answer clearly by filling in the oval for that particular question. Make dark heavy marks that fill each oval completely.
  - You must clearly erase all changes on the answer sheet. Smudges and extra dots are not acceptable and may cause the rejection of a particular answer.
  - Do not make any stray marks on the answer sheet.
  - If you choose to change an answer, make sure that you erase the first answer completely.
11. **Remember** to select the best answer. Each question is worth one (1) point and scoring for an unanswered question is zero (0).
12. If you believe there is a poorly worded question, or a question that is difficult to understand, please mark the question number and a description of why you believe the question is poor on the backside of the Scantron sheet. This will allow the AFSC Administration to review the question and verify if there is any problem noted with the question. In some cases the AFSC may void questions for circumstances such as:
  - a. the question/answer is not consistent with the standard the candidate is tested against
  - b. the question/answer is poorly worded or structured
13. This test consists of \_\_\_\_\_ questions.

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14. Do you have any final questions for me before we begin the examination?
15. You may now open the examination booklet and begin.

## Verbal Instructions for Practical Examination

### General Instructions to Candidates Regarding Practical Examination

The Certifying Officer must read the following to the candidates:

1. Welcome to the practical examination. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm the Certifying Officer for this examination.
2. Let's review the following:
  - Location of exits \_\_\_\_\_
  - Location of restrooms \_\_\_\_\_
  - In case of Emergency – exit building and meet \_\_\_\_\_
  - Is everyone physically prepared to take the test?
3. It is my responsibility to ensure that all applicants test in a safe and equal manner. Safety is our number one priority. If you have any concerns about the safety at any of the skill stations please discuss them with the evaluator for that station.
4. By successfully completing this examination process and receiving subsequent certification, you will have proven to yourself, the State of Alaska, and your local community that you have achieved a level of competency assuring that you can provide quality firefighting service.
5. The selection of the skill station evaluators used today relates to his or her knowledge in each particular skill. Skill station Evaluators are observers and recorders of your expected appropriate actions. They record your performance in relationship to the criteria listed on the skill sheets developed by the AFSC.
6. The Evaluators will conduct the practical skill stations as per AFSC guidelines. Please pay particular attention to the following items:
  - a. The skill station evaluator will call you into the station when it is prepared for testing.
  - b. The AFSC prohibits candidates from staging in the testing area while waiting for his/her next station. A candidate must wait outside the testing area until the station is open and an Evaluator calls for the next candidate.
  - c. Candidates who have completed a practical skill station should stage separately from the other candidates who have not completed that station. This may require several segregated areas away from the testing locations for the staging of candidates.
  - d. The AFSC prohibits candidates from taking books, pamphlets, brochures or other study material into the station. It is not permissible to make any copies or recordings of any station.
  - e. Each skill station Evaluator will describe the scenario or series of skills a candidate must perform. The Evaluator will not describe the individual elements of a skill sheet or station, but will describe the overall objective of that station.



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- f. A Candidate must pay particular attention to the Evaluator's description of what skill he or she must perform. The skill station evaluator will offer to repeat the instructions and will ask if you understood them. Do not ask for additional information beyond the instructions, as it is not permissible for the skill station Evaluator to give additional information.
- g. Candidates sometimes complain that skill station evaluators are abrupt, cold or appear unfriendly. It is important for candidates to understand that the Evaluators are to avoid casual conversation with candidates. This is a requirement to assure fair and equal treatment of all candidates throughout the examination.
- h. Skill station Evaluators are not to indicate any judgment regarding a candidate's performance in the skill station.
- i. Candidates should not interpret any of the evaluators' remarks as an indication of her or his overall performance. Candidates should simply perform the skills to the best of his or her ability.
- j. Supplies for each skill station may include several types of equipment for candidate selection. Each candidate will be given time at the beginning of the skill station to survey and select the equipment necessary for that particular task. A candidate should not feel obligated to use all the equipment. If a candidate is required to have personal protective equipment for a particular station, the AFSC expects he or she to supply bunker gear for this examination.
- k. As a candidate progresses through the practical examination, each skill stations evaluator will be observing and recording his or her performance. Candidates should not interpret Evaluator documentation practices as an indicator for performance in the station. There is no correlation between the volume of his/her documentation and the quality of a candidate's performance. A candidate is encouraged to explain the things she or he is doing during performance in the station.
- l. If the station has a time limit, the evaluator will inform a candidate of this during the instructions. When a candidate reaches the time limit, the skill station evaluator will inform you to stop your performance. However, if a candidate completes the station before the allotted time, he or she should inform the evaluator that she or he is finished. An Evaluator may ask a candidate to return equipment to its location at the end of his or her portion of the skill station.
- m. The AFSC prohibits a candidate to discuss specific details of any station with another at any time. When traveling from station to station, candidates should keep all excess noise to a minimum and be prompt in reporting to each station to minimize the overall test time.
- n. The skill result is pass/fail for each practical examination station. A candidate who is unable to demonstrate satisfactory competency in a skill station, will be informed of the general subject area but not the specific element.
- o. If a candidate is unsuccessful in the completion of a skill, she or he may return and attempt that skill again. A candidate may only attempt that station twice after the initial attempt (three total attempts). A candidate who is unable to demonstrate satisfactory competency within three attempts must receive remedial training before attempting the station again. The Certifying Officer shall determine whether you can return and complete this skill or station later today or in the future.
- p. During the skills testing session, a candidate will not receive a detailed critique of his or her performance on any station. The examination is a formal verification process and not designed to assist with teaching or learning. The purpose of this examination is to verify achievement of the

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competencies after the education and training is complete. The AFSC recommends that a candidate contact her or his instructor or teaching institution for remedial training if she or he is unsuccessful in a skill station.

- q. The skill station evaluator does not play a role in the establishment of pass/fail criteria, but is merely an observer and recorder of your actions in the skill station.
- r. The Certifying Officer is here today to assure that fair, objective, and impartial evaluations occur in accordance with the guidelines contained in this guide. If a candidate has any concerns, notify the Certifying Officer immediately to discuss concerns. The Certifying Officer will be visiting all skill stations throughout the examination to verify adherence to these guidelines. Please remember that a candidate must voice concerns or complaints about the test with the Certifying Officer before leaving the site today.

### Points to Remember

1. Safety is the Number One Priority
2. Follow instructions from the staff.
3. During the examination, move only to areas directed by the staff.
4. Give your name as you arrive at each station.
5. Listen carefully to the testing scenario explanation at each station.
6. Ask questions if the instructions are not clear.
7. During the examination, it is not permissible for a candidate to talk about the examination with anyone other than the skill station evaluator, or the assistant assigned to help at the skill station.
8. Be aware of any time limits, but do not sacrifice quality performance for speed.
9. Each station contains the necessary equipment. Select and use only that which is necessary to perform the task adequately.

Does anyone have any questions concerning the practical examination?

## INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATORS REGARDING PRACTICAL EXAMINATION

The Certifying Officer must read the following to the evaluators.

1. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I will be the Certifying Officer administering this examination. On behalf of the Alaska Fire Standards Council I thank you for your help today.
2. It is my responsibility to ensure that all applicants test in a safe and equal manner. Safety is our number one priority. If you have any concerns about the safety at any of the stations please discuss them with me prior to the beginning of the testing. It is your responsibility to monitor the safety of evolutions conducted at your station. Please contact me directly if you have questions or concerns about safety during this examination.
3. Each of you must confirm you have the appropriate training to evaluate the station I have selected for you.
4. Each of you must have certification at the same level (or above) of that skill station you are testing.
5. You must sign an [Evaluator Code of Ethics Compliance Agreement](#). This agreement specifies that you have completed the required training program and will adhere to the AFSC policies and procedures regarding the evaluation of certification applicants.
6. I will remove any evaluator from the test site and file a report with the AFSC Council Administrator if he or she fails to comply with the policies and/or procedures of this testing session.
7. The basis for all data concerning a candidate's performance is your objective recordings and observations. You serve as evaluator today because of your expertise in the assigned station and ability to fairly and accurately observe and document various performances. You must report all performances with the

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greatest possible degree of objectivity. The design of skill evaluation instruments you are using today will assist you in objectively evaluating the candidates.

8. Evaluators must remember the following points.
  - a. This examination is a formal verification procedure not designed for teaching, coaching or remedial training. You are not permitted to give any indication whatsoever of satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance to any candidate at any time.
  - b. You must not discuss any specific performance with anyone other than me. If you are unsure of scoring a particular performance, notify me as soon as possible. Do not sign or complete any evaluation form if you have any questions at all, until we have discussed the performance.
  - c. You should act in a professional manner at all times, paying particular attention to the manner in which you address candidates. You must be consistent, fair and respectful in carrying out your duties as a formal evaluator. The safest approach is to limit your dialogue to examination-related material only.
  - d. Develop a dialogue with candidates throughout her or his performance and ask questions for clarification purposes. Do not lead candidate questions, but ask when additional clarification is required. You may also have to prompt a candidate to perform some action.
  - e. Do not ask for additional information beyond the scope of the skill, such as having the candidate explain advanced Firefighter II or Fire Officer information if they are taking the Firefighter I exam.
  - f. To assist the CO in grading a candidate during the skill station, the AFSC has developed a Practical Skills Evaluator training directive. The information and skills taught in that directive provide guidance when grading a candidate. The AFSC has also included Practical Skills Evaluation guidelines as a reference. These guidelines are listed later in this manual. The established evaluation guidelines are for all skill testing, not just in a final examination situation, so some of the elements of the guideline may or may not be relevant to this particular skill situation.
  - g. We suggest that you introduce yourself to each candidate as you call him or her into the station. At no time is a candidate permitted to remain in the testing area while waiting for his or her next station. Clearly print the candidate's first and last name on the evaluation form as well as your name, the date and skill station number.
  - h. You should describe to the candidate what this particular skill station involves and what you expect him or her to do. You must give a description of the station to each candidate in the same manner to assure consistency and fairness.
  - i. Give the candidate time to inspect any equipment, if necessary, and explain any specific design features of the equipment if a candidate asks.
  - j. Fill out all skill sheets in a manner that prohibits the candidate from directly observing the grading of a task or the comments noted. After the candidate finishes the performance, complete the skill sheet in accordance with the documented performance. Please remember that the most accurate method of fairly evaluating any candidate is one in which your attention is devoted entirely to the performance of the candidate.
  - k. You must observe and enforce any time limits for the skill stations. Upon reaching a time limit, promptly stop the candidate's performance and direct the candidate to move on to his or her next station. Ensure that the candidate does not take notes or recordings of the station. You should check the "Fail" column for any steps that were not completed within the allotted time.
  - l. You are responsible for the security of all evaluation material throughout the day and must return all material to me before you leave this examination site.
  - m. After you receive your materials for today's examination, you may proceed to your station and check any props and equipment to assure preparation of the skill station for the first candidate. You should orient any additional evaluators and assistants with their roles in today's examination. Any assistants should act as a similar person would in a field situation. The AFSC prefers that Assistant training is at least the same level as the applicant is applying. Please emphasize the importance of their consistent and professional performance throughout today's examination.
  - n. Please examine your assigned station and any associated equipment.
  - o. Are there any questions?

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## Certifying Officer Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Problem:** A candidate who failed a practical examination complains to you that equipment that was supposed to be available was not present or not in working condition halfway through the examination process.

**Possible Solution:** If you can confirm that there is merit to the complaint, you may authorize an additional attempt at the examination. Since you checked each station before the examination to ensure adequate equipment, you should also find out where it went or how it became inoperable!

2. **Problem:** An evaluator tells you that the last candidate tested performed correctly, but exceeded a time limit by just a few seconds.

**Possible Solution:** The candidate must retest if she or he exceeded the specified time limit

3. **Problem:** You arrive at the testing location and find that three of the five evaluators scheduled to attend will not be present. No replacements are available.

**Possible Solution:** Reschedule the examination if possible. If it is not possible, you may opt to test two stations, test two more, etc. This will add considerable time to the overall practical examination. It may also be possible to get the two longest or most complex stations under way and attempt to secure other evaluators.

In either event, advise the AFSC Administration of the problem so that the AFSC can take remedial action with the instructor.

4. **Problem:** After completing the application for certification, a candidate pulls you aside and tells you that he had been convicted three years ago of a felony, and asks your advice about testing.

**Possible Solution:** Test the candidate along with the rest of the class and advise him or her to submit the documentation of the arrest and conviction with the application. Advise the candidate that the AFSC Council Administrator will review that specific application separately. Send the individual's application with those from the rest of the class.

5. **Problem:** The candidate's specific fire department procedures conflict slightly with the requirements of the skill sheets.

**Possible Solution:** If the minimum task requirement is achievable then instruct the evaluators to test the candidate based on the department procedure. Also, notify the Lead Instructor that he or she must bring these items to the attention of the AFSC Administration prior to the final evaluation process so that corrections and adjustments are made prior to the candidates arriving for testing.

6. **Problem:** A candidate has an obvious medical condition that presents a safety concern related to physical requirements for performing firefighter tasks within a test station.

**Possible Solution:** If it is evident the individual is not fit to perform physical work on the day of the practical examination DO NOT allow the candidate to participate; contact the AFSC Administrator if warranted. Request a doctor's release that clearly indicates the candidate has medical clearance to perform physical work specific to firefighter duties included in the examination. Express your concerns to the TSC; at a minimum have the TSC/TO provide a written statement that they are accepting full responsibility for the individual

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## **Practical Skill Evaluation Guideline**

### **Appointment**

1. Candidate
  - a. Know the name of the candidate
  - b. Correct Personal Protective equipment
2. Performance Task
  - a. Requirements of the task (Skill Sheet)
  - b. Required tools and/or equipment
3. Practical Test Area
  - a. Safety Officer (if needed)
  - b. Clear area of operation
  - c. No distractions
4. Performance Standards
  - a. Conducted in accordance with the current AFSC skill sheets.
- b. Evaluator has current Skill Sheets for each candidate that is testing

### **Meeting the Candidate**

1. Be on time
2. Ensure private test environment.
3. Eliminate interruptions
4. Leave your ego outside of the test room/area
5. Remove your prejudice from this environment
6. Keep personal/business problems to yourself
7. Be polite, courteous and receptive
8. Do not be arrogant, overbearing or condescending
9. Provide adequate description of the examination
10. Describe safety procedures

### **Oral Questions**

1. This is primarily a performance examination. Keep oral questions to a minimum.
2. Questions must be:
  - a. Valid
  - b. Relevant
3. Applicable to the individual skills station or examination tested

## **Practical Examination**

1. Have the Skill Sheets with you at the test site
2. Conduct examination according to the Skill Sheets
3. Candidate must complete skills:
  - a. Safely and According to Skill Sheets
  - b. Within prescribed limits (if required)
4. No instructing/coaching during test
5. If unsatisfactory, allow the student to complete the examination and then immediately inform the Certifying Officer. For final certification examinations, contact the Certifying Officer prior to retest.
6. Examples of unsatisfactory performance:
  - a. Exceeding limitations: time, safety, and equipment limitations
  - b. Inadequate/insufficient personal protective equipment
  - c. Lack of skill accuracy and task completion as defined on the skill evaluation sheet
  - d. Poor judgment in skill performance (i.e.- wrong application of tool or equipment or safety violation)
  - e. Failure to appropriately apply basic fire-fighting knowledge
  - f. Not competent in the specified task or skill steps
  - g. Outcome of the specified task is in doubt (i.e.- incorrectly performed or did not accomplish skill evaluation criteria)
  - h. Need for Evaluator intervention (i.e.- imminent health or safety risk to candidate or others)
  - i. Failure to adhere to basic safety principles or guidelines
7. A candidate may repeat performance that does not meet the required standard during the practical examination twice during a test site visit. Notify the Certifying Officer immediately after the initial attempt and failure. The Certifying Officer will schedule the additional two attempts. You must bring the CO information about unsuccessful attempts that are a result of equipment malfunction, safety problems, or any other reason outside the candidate's ability to control.