

Summary and Historical Prospective of the New York State Written Certification Examinations

Article 30 of the Public Health Law provides the statutory authority and framework for Emergency Medical Services in New York State. Approximately ten years ago, Article 30-A, the “EMS Personnel Training Act of 1986,” was signed into law to expand and improve training opportunities for EMS personnel.

To implement the mandate of Article 30 and 30A, a number of rules and regulations were established and published as the State EMS Code. The State EMS Code is frequently called “Part 800” because its official title is Part 800 of Chapter VI of Title 10 (Health) of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules, and Regulations (10NYCCR-800).

The Certified First Responder (CFR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Advanced EMT examination you will be taking is required for initial certification and recertification under the State EMS Code.

The Examination Development Process

The New York State EMS written examinations are based on curricula adopted by the State EMS Council and approved by the Commissioner of Health. The state-approved curricula meets or exceeds similar USDOT national standard curricula. To determine how many questions to ask in each of the content areas, an examination blueprint is developed. Data collected from certified EMS providers, educators, and medical directors as to the importance of each area to practice and the amount of time spent in each area, combined with the number of course hours spent in these areas were used to determine the examination blueprint for all the examinations.

To develop the examinations, items (questions) based on curriculum objectives are written, reviewed, and validated for relevance and importance to EMS practice by content experts. The content experts are made up of active EMS providers and educators through the state. Items that survive the review and validation process are included in the item bank and available for use on the certification examinations. The next step in the examination development process is for a representative committee of EMS content experts to meet with Professional Examination Service (PES) staff to select the required number of items that reflect the test blueprint from the item bank. The selected items are reviewed by PES program and editorial staff and a draft examination is prepared. The draft is sent to various EMS providers, including EMS physicians and educators, for review and comment. All comments are reconciled by the State EMS Office and sent to PES for finalization. Finalized examinations are then printed and shipped to the test sites as needed.

When a new examination is administered for the first time, a comprehensive item analysis is generated. The item analysis provides information on how many candidates selected the correct answer to each question and how many candidates selected the other choices. On rare occasions, the item analysis will identify problems with an item or some unexpected results. PES reviews this information with the State EMS Office and if warranted, changes are made to the answer key (e.g., more than one answer is scored as correct). If key changes are made, candidates who received on-site scoring might find that their final official results are slightly higher than the results they received on-site.

Examination Content

All the State EMS written examinations consist of four-choice multiple choice type questions. All exams except for the CFR exams contain 10 pilot items (questions that have never been used on an exam). The pilot questions are placed randomly throughout the test and are not included in the candidate’s score. For example, the Paramedic exam contains a total of 235 items; however, the candidates score is based on 225 items (the 10 pilot items are excluded from the scoring).

Testing Time

The total amount of testing time allotted for each examination is presented in the following table:

| Exam Level | Total Testing Time |
|------------|--------------------|
| CFR | 1½ hours |
| EMT | 2½ hours |
| EMT-I | 3 hours |
| EMT-CC | 4 hours |
| EMT-P | 4 hours |

Passing Points

At the CFR and EMT level, candidates must achieve a score of 70% or higher in order to pass the examination. At the advanced EMT levels (EMT-Intermediate, EMT-Critical Care, and EMT-Paramedic), candidates must achieve a score of 70% on the basic portion of the examination and a score of 70% on the advanced portion of the examination in order to pass. The following table presents both the percent and raw score (the number of items that must be answered correctly) passing points for the State written examinations.

| Exam Level | Percent Score | Raw Score |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| CFR | 70% | 35 |
| EMT | 70% | 70 |
| EMT-I: | | |
| Basic Portion | 70% | 53 |
| Advanced Portion | 70% | 39 |
| EMT-CC: | | |
| Basic Portion | 70% | 53 |
| Advanced Portion | 70% | 88 |
| EMT-P: | | |
| Basic Portion | 70% | 53 |
| Advanced Portion | 70% | 105 |

Passing Policy for Advanced EMT Exams

To be certified at the Advanced EMT (AEMT) level, candidates must score 70% or higher on both the basic portion and the advanced portion of the examination. Candidates who pass the basic portion (scoring 70% or higher) and fail the advanced portion (scoring less than 70%) will receive an EMT-D certification card and a failure letter for the AEMT examination. Candidates must retake the entire examination within one year if they wish to be certified at the advanced level.

Candidates who fail (score less than 70%) the basic examination will receive a failure letter for the entire examination, even if they pass (score 70% or higher) the advanced portion of the examination. Candidates must retake the entire examination within one year if they want to obtain certification.

Receipt of Examination Results

Examination results are generally mailed to candidates within four to six weeks from the test date. Results are mailed to the address provided on the student application that candidates complete at the beginning of the course.

Incorrect information on the student application and/or on the answer sheet (e.g., accidentally recording '97 for year of birth) will delay the receipt of examination results.

Examination results cannot be given over the phone. **Please do not call the State EMS Office or PES for this information.**

Policies and Procedures

- **If you are unable to test on the assigned test date:**

If you are unable to take the certification examination with your class, you will need to contact the State EMS Office testing hotline at 1-800-628-0193. Be prepared to provide the following information:

- Name
- Telephone Number
- Course Number
- CFR/EMT/AEMT Number

After your eligibility has been verified, you will be assigned a new examination date at the regional test site nearest your address. Registration for regional test sites are usually closed six weeks prior to the examination, so do not expect to take the examination any earlier than six weeks after you call.

You will receive a confirmation letter, with directions to the regional test site, approximately three weeks prior to the test date.

- **If you didn't receive your Student Examination Ticket or have lost it:**

A Student Examination Ticket will be provided by your course instructor after you have successfully completed all the course requirements. If you fail the examination on your first attempt, you will receive a new Student Examination Ticket with your examination results.

If you lose your Student Examination Ticket, report the loss to the State EMS Office Certification Unit at 1-518-402-0996.

- **If you fail the examination on your second attempt:**

If you fail the examination on your second attempt, you must successfully complete a refresher (or another original) course prior to being admitted to another state written certification examination.

- **If you need to request special accommodations:**

In accordance with the American Disabilities Act of 1990, the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations for the state written certification examinations for those persons with documented disabilities.

- **All requests for special accommodations must be made in writing to the:**

Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
New York State Department of Health
433 River Street, Suite 303
Troy, New York 12180-2299

The written request must come directly from the candidate and should indicate the disability and the special accommodation(s) required. This request should be accompanied by recent documentation from a licensed professional or certified specialist appropriate for the disability verifying both the disability and the need for the accommodation.

- **If you have additional questions about the State certification examinations:**

Your instructor is the best resource for questions about the State certification examination. If the instructor cannot answer the question, he/she may contact the State EMS Office at 518-402-0996.

How to Prepare For and Take the Test

The first step in preparing for the test is to decide what you need to study. Although you should review all areas that will be covered on the exam, focus your study on those areas in which you are weak or in which you have had little training or experience. In addition to mentally preparing yourself for the test, it is also important to prepare yourself physically. To prepare yourself physically, keep the following points in mind prior to taking any test:

Get good nights sleep. Don't stay up all night cramming. Avoid both stimulants and tranquilizers. Don't drink a lot of liquids or eat a big meal before the test. If you have to go to the restroom several times during the test, it could disrupt your train of thought. Eating a big meal before the test could make you feel sleepy and lethargic. If you do feel that you need to eat something before the test, have a snack rather than a big meal. Wear clothing that is comfortable and appropriate for the time of year. Wearing layered clothing is recommended, so that you can add or remove a layer as necessary. Wear a watch so that you can monitor your time during the test.

One of the most important rules to follow when you are taking any test is to give the test and the examination proctor your undivided attention. It is extremely important to listen carefully to the directions for the test, especially the directions for filling out the answer sheet. You will be required to mark your responses to the questions, as well as other identifying information (e.g., your name, identification number, test code, etc.) on a special answer sheet that is read by an optical scanner. During the actual test, if you still do not understand how to code your name or the other required information, raise your hand and ask the examination proctor for assistance.

When the test begins, note the starting time. Read the first question and all four choices before responding to the question. Even if you believe the first or second choice is the answer to the question, read all the choices before selecting one. One of the later responses could be a more precise answer to the question. Make sure that you record your answers on the answer sheet and not in the examination booklet. Answers in the booklet will not be scored. When recording information on your answer sheet, you must follow the instructions listed below in order to assure proper scoring of the examination:

1. Use only a number 2 pencil. If you use any other marking instrument, your answers cannot be scored.
2. Your answers must be dark pencil marks completely filling in the circles.
3. Completely erase any marks you wish to change.
4. Do not leave smudges on the answer sheet.
5. Do not make marks in the column of black lines on the bottom of the answer sheet.
6. Do not bend or fold any part of your answer sheet.

If you need to mark your answers in the booklet, don't wait until the end of the test to transfer your answers onto the answer sheet. If you are having difficulty answering a specific question, skip it and go on to the next question. Make sure that you also skip the corresponding answer space for that question on your answer sheet. If you forget to skip a space on your answer sheet, all of your subsequent answers will be in the wrong place and could result in a failing score on the examination.

After you have answered all questions of which you are certain, go through the test again and try to answer the questions you couldn't easily answer the first time. As you reread these questions, try to eliminate the responses you feel are incorrect. The more responses you can eliminate, the better the chance you have at selecting the correct answer. There is no penalty for guessing, so if you can't eliminate any of the responses, it is better to guess at the answer rather than to leave it blank. Therefore, if time permits, you should try to answer all the questions on the examination.

The time allotted for each examination allows approximately one and one-half minutes per question. You should monitor your progress at various intervals throughout the examination to ensure that you will have enough time to complete the examination. For example, if you are taking the EMT Basic examination, you should be at or beyond question 55 after one hour and fifteen minutes into the test. If you are taking the EMT-Paramedic examination, you should be at or beyond question 120 after 2 hours of testing time. If you finish the examination before time is called, you should review the answers you have selected.

The following list summarizes the points you should keep in mind when you are taking a test:

- Listen carefully to all instructions and give the test and the examination proctor your undivided attention.
- Ask for help if you do not understand the instructions or how to fill out your answer sheet.
- Carefully read each question and all choices before selecting your response.
- Answer all questions that you are sure of first, then go back to the more difficult questions, if time permits.
- Try to answer all questions, even if you have to guess at the answer.
- Make sure you record your answers on the answer sheet and not in the examination booklet.
- If you skip a question, make sure you skip the corresponding space for that question on your answer sheet.
- Do not make any stray marks on your answer sheet. Use the margins of your test booklet for scrap paper, if necessary.
- Monitor your time throughout the examination so that you do not fall behind.
- If you finish the examination before time is called, go back and check your work.

Test Day

On the day of the test, you should report to the test site at least 15 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time. You should bring your Student Examination Ticket and several well sharpened number 2 pencils with erasers with you to the test site. Your course instructor should provide you with this ticket prior to the test date. If you did not receive or lost this ticket, follow the instructions listed under the section entitled Policies and Procedures.

Your Student Examination Ticket is the only material you will need to take the test. Books, papers, and calculators are not allowed into the testing room. No scratch paper is provided, however, you may write in the test booklet if necessary. Note taking during the examination is prohibited and no one is allowed to duplicate or retain any portion of the examination. Only one person may be excused from the room at a time. If you wish to leave the room, you must leave all your test materials with the proctor.