

The

The Newsletter of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians

Registry

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NREMT Begins Move to Computer Based Testing

The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) is transitioning its pencil-and-paper exams to computer based testing starting in January 2007.

The NREMT has entered into an agreement with Pearson VUE, Inc. to provide its computer based testing program. Pearson VUE provides innovative electronic testing solutions that enhance the performance, reliability and security of high-stakes testing programs throughout the world. Its clients include organizations such as the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the American Board of Emergency Medicine, the American Board of Internal Medicine, and the American Board of Surgery, to name a few.

The implementation of computer based testing is important to the NREMT, because it strengthens the organization's commitment to serving the EMS community and providing a valid and reliable exam process. It also provides numerous benefits to candidates, educators, and others in the EMS community as well as the American public. Following are six of these benefits.

Rapid Turnaround of Test Results

A survey the NREMT conducted in 2002 reported it took most EMTs 30 days to receive their NREMT cards and 30 more days to receive their state EMT license. In addition, some EMTs had to wait that long just for a testing location to become available near them.

With computer based testing, results will be available to candidates and state licensing agencies the next business day, helping to fill vital EMS positions with highly qualified, licensed professionals much more quickly.

Increased Testing Flexibility

NREMT candidates now have a choice when scheduling their exams. They can test when they are ready, at a time that is convenient to them, and at the location they choose. By administering the NREMT exams through Pearson VUE's extensive testing network, candidates can schedule their exams based on what's most important to them – time, date or location.

Candidates no longer have to wait 30-60 days until a test is being offered in their community. If there is space available at a testing center on a given day, the candidate can sign up to take the test at that time. In some cases, it could be the very day they call to sched-

ule. Exams can be taken during the day, in the evening or on some weekends.

The testing network includes hundreds of testing centers located in every state across the country, and the NREMT is working with Pearson VUE and state EMS offices to establish even more centers.

Easier Registration and Scheduling

With computer based testing, registering for and scheduling the NREMT exam will be much easier with online access. Once candidates have successfully completed all of the necessary steps and received a confirmation, they can schedule their test.

Steps to a successful registration include: applying online at www.nremt.org; paying online via credit card or mailing a payment to NREMT headquarters; completing the EMT training course; and passing the practical exam.

The last two steps require verification by the candidate's instructor/medical director which can be done online with computer based testing, expediting the registration and scheduling process.

More Accurate Evaluation

Computer based testing allows the NREMT to take advantage of one of the most accurate methods for determining professional competency – computer adaptive testing (CAT).

With CAT, each candidate takes a unique test with questions drawn from a database of hundreds of items. With each answered question, the computer will estimate the candidate's ability level and select the next question – one he or she will find challenging. As the exam progresses, the ability estimate becomes more precise.

If the EMT shows competency very quickly by successfully answering the more difficult questions, he or she will receive a minimum number of questions and pass the examination. Lower performing candidates may need more questions at varying levels to show their competency. And some candidates may be unable to meet the passing standard, but with computer based testing will be able to retest more quickly.

This state-of-the-art type of testing is based entirely on individual ability, more accurately demonstrating the candidate's competency as an EMT.



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Focus Group Gives NREMT New Insight on Re-Registration

Ten training officers from around the country met at NREMT headquarters in early November 2004 to give the NREMT some fresh perspectives on its re-registration process.

“We were interested in learning about some of the ‘best practices’ from EMS agencies around the country, so we selected participants with a track record of developing successful re-registration programs locally,” said Gregg Margolis, NREMT Associate Director.

The information gathered from the focus group will be used to help the NREMT develop resources to help all training officers and nationally registered EMS providers to smoothly navigate the re-registration process.

A major need identified at the meeting was the development of a paperless, online re-registration process, which the NREMT hopes to implement in the next three to five years. Some additional suggestions included updates to the re-registration section of the NREMT web site and the online re-registration form.

Participants included Bob Audet (Hudson, OH), Chris Cebollero (Fort Worth, TX), Vicki Glenn (Largo, FL), Douglas Haffield (Duluth, MN), Karen Lane (Louisville, KY), Jay Scott (Syracuse, NY), Ed Stith (Springdale, AR), Stephanie Stuart (Lincoln, CA), Sherm Syverson (Fargo, ND), and John West (Williamsport, PA).

Re-Registration Procedures for Military EMTs

The NREMT appreciates the sacrifice made by military EMTs who are deployed on missions to serve and protect our country. We understand that during this time these EMTs may have difficulty completing or submitting their continuing education requirements, and we want to be flexible regarding their re-registration deadlines.

Re-registration extension requests will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Deployed EMTs should contact their program liaisons regarding their re-registration. The NREMT will work closely with the program liaisons to help ensure that deployed EMTs can support their missions and continue to deliver safe and effective pre-hospital care.

Civilian EMTs who are deployed in a non-medical capacity will need to contact the NREMT upon their return from service to discuss their re-registration issues.

Despite being deployed, it is still important that military medics are current on the latest life saving skills in order to provide their injured comrades with the best possible care. There are many educational opportunities available to most military EMTs in deployed locations. The NREMT encourages military medics to contact their program liaisons for more information on these opportunities.

EMT liaisons to help serve you:

Air Force: SMSgt. Kevin Lambing (940) 676-7569

Army: Capt. Nancy Emma (210) 221-5214

Navy: Chief Kevin Howell (301) 319-4762



The National Registry thanks Tanya Newton for 10 years of dedicated service to the NREMT and to EMTs across the U.S. During her tenure as Re-Registration Coordinator, she made an incredible impact on the EMS community by successfully processing more than 300,000 re-registrations and doubling the number of re-registrations received annually. She served a vital role in assuring the continued competency of EMS providers nationwide. Her work was important to NREMTs, the mission of the Registry and every citizen. Tanya left the NREMT in early February to relocate closer to her family. The NREMT will be seeking to replace the Re-Registration Coordinator position in the next few months.

Expedite Your Re-Registration Application

You can expedite the processing of your re-registration application by filling it out online. With this method, your information will already be in the NREMT system when your paperwork arrives. After you complete the online form, you simply need to print the completed form, acquire the necessary signatures and mail it to the NREMT.

It is important to understand that your re-registration application WILL NOT be processed until the NREMT has received your completed form with signatures and your payment. You can pay your re-registration fees online with a credit card when you fill out the application or you can mail your payment with your completed form.

Please also note that you may submit the completed online form OR the form you received in the mail. Please do not submit both. This will cause a delay in the processing of your re-registration.

NREMT salutes military medics

The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians salutes the many NREMTs who are serving as part of our country's efforts to provide security for America. Army and Air Force enlisted personnel serving as medics in Iraq or Afghanistan are all NREMTs. We have received word from the military medical departments that these soldier medics and airman are doing an outstanding job treating wounded soldiers and the populations of these suffering nations. We are grateful

for their contributions.

As a part of these conflicts, many NREMTs have been wounded and some have lost their lives defending freedom. The NREMT wishes a speedy recovery to those who were wounded. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those medics who have made the ultimate sacrifice as Good Samaritans, saving the lives of fallen comrades in battle.

NREMT Begins Move

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Superior Exam Security

Each testing center is a highly secure environment with many processes in place to protect the integrity of the NREMT testing program. An intricate system of physical, password and encryption security ensures the protection of confidential data including test items, test results, candidate data, testing schedules and other sensitive data.

Procedures are also in place to confirm each candidate's identity, and trained professionals use electronic surveillance technology to monitor candidates throughout the entire testing experience.

By conducting exams at Pearson VUE's secure facilities, the NREMT is ensuring that every exam is protected and that every EMT nationwide has a similar testing experience. In addition to being a fortified environment, each testing center is carefully controlled to encourage peak performance for exam candidates.

Increased Professionalism for EMS

The NREMT's transition to computer based testing follows a trend started in health career testing by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing in 1994. Now the majority of allied health disciplines have made the switch, demonstrating a renewed commitment to test security and better measurement of candidates.

Will Computer Based Testing Impact the Practical Exam?

The NREMT has no plans to change the content or format of the practical exam. It is anticipated, however, that Advanced Level candidates will need to successfully complete the practical exam prior to scheduling the written exam. Watch for updates on the new CBT section of the NREMT web site!

Visit the new CBT section on the NREMT web site (www.nremt.org) for updates on the CBT implementation, FAQs, and more!

This change illustrates the professionalism of the field of Emergency Medical Services and highlights its importance to public health and safety. It also garners the same recognition that other professional health care designations have attained in this country.

Implementing Computer Based Testing

The National Registry will spend the next two years preparing to deliver tests via computer. During this time, the organization will be in constant communication with our network of EMS directors, educators, training programs and others to make the transition to computer based testing as smooth as possible.

The NREMT will be meeting with state EMS directors to discuss the implementation of computer based testing and its effect on each state, as well as to determine where additional testing centers are needed.

Meetings will be held with key stakeholders in each state to increase awareness and understanding of computer based testing and its impact on the current certification procedures.

In addition, the NREMT will be in contact with EMS educators to outline a new online system for confirming a candidate's course completion.

And finally, the NREMT will develop brochures explaining computer based testing and a CD that will contain a sample computer based test, how to register online, information about the National Registry, and more.

Your support in this process is vital. By implementing computer based testing, the NREMT is assuring that your department will be able to hire new EMTs much quicker and that those new EMTs will be safe, effective and competent members of your team.

Board Updates Strategic Priorities for 2005

In November of 2000, the NREMT Board of Directors developed a dynamic Strategic Plan for the organization. The Plan identified the NREMT customers, products and services, values, major assets, barriers, and strategic directions to guide the organization through the next decade. The Plan was designed so the Board could annually reaffirm the core information and update the strategic directions. Following is a summary of the strategic priorities for 2005.

The top priority of the National Registry over the next two years is the implementation of computer based testing as the method for delivering NREMT written examinations. As you read in the article on page one, the transition from paper-and-pencil exams to computer based testing is a necessity for the NREMT to maintain the highest level of test security and the optimal measurement of candidates' competency.

The second priority for 2005 is the implementation of a community relations program. To accomplish this priority, the NREMT hired a Community Relations Manager in Dec. 2004. (See related article on page 5.) The community relations department is responsible for advocating and educating the EMS community that the NREMT is the National EMS Certification Agency as identified in the *EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach*. Action steps include visiting the state EMS offices in all 50 states over the next two years to discuss the transition to computer based testing, as well as developing numerous collateral pieces about the NREMT and its programs.

A third strategic priority is the implementation of a research program using NREMT resources for the betterment of NREMT programs and to contribute to the EMS community. (See related article on page 4.)

The NREMT's fourth strategic priority in 2005 is the continuation of current functions and planned enhancements to the NREMT's administration and operations. This includes creating hundreds of additional test items in preparation for computer based testing; participating in all aspects of implementing the *EMS Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach*; reviewing the NREMT response to the Americans with Disability Act; and reviewing the NREMT by-laws.

Maintaining and extending the base of states and services using the NREMT and increasing the number of EMTs using NREMT National EMS Certification is also a strategic priority for the organization. Working toward this end, the NREMT will conduct a feasibility study to determine barriers and opportunities to the use of NREMT re-registration as part of the state licensure process.

The final strategic priority for 2005 is to explore issues associated with using NREMT exams in foreign countries by conducting a pilot study in Iceland.

A progress report on each of these initiatives will be presented to the Board at both the June and November meetings.

NREMT Continues LEADS Project

The NREMT, in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration EMS Division, continued to collect data for the Longitudinal EMT Attributes and Demographics Study (LEADS) in 2004. The LEADS project is a ten-year longitudinal study intended to track changes in the EMS workforce. The study began in 1999.

The NREMT anticipates that the LEADS project will be of significant long-term benefit to the EMS community by helping EMS professionals make informed decisions regarding the future of the EMS profession.

The survey is distributed to 5,000 EMTs and covers a wide range of topics including education, finances, management, patient care and the impact of their job on their personal life. In addition, each year,

the survey includes a series of questions on a specific topic of focus. In 2004, the topic was Ambulance Safety. In 2005, the topic is sleep, which was selected because sleep disturbances were identified from data collected in previous years as a common health issue among EMS providers.

The LEADS committee is dedicated to publishing results from this project and articles have appeared in several peer-reviewed journals. (See related article on page 5.) The LEADS committee is currently searching for other publication alternatives in an effort to reach as many EMS providers as possible.

For more information on the LEADS project and to review past surveys, visit the NREMT web site (www.nremt.org).

NREMT Conducts Third National EMS Practice Analysis

Have you ever wondered why certain topics appear on the National Registry exams and others don't? We are required by the American Psychological Association's Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing and the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) to make sure that our exams reflect the most important aspects of the practice of out-of-hospital care. So, how do we determine what is important? We regularly conduct a practice analysis.

The first nationwide analysis of the practice of EMTs was completed in 1994, and the NREMT repeats and refines the study every five years. The practice analysis is an extensive survey of EMTs who are working in the field. Participants are asked to report the frequency and criticality of a variety of pre-hospital situations and skills. These data are used to mathematically represent the importance of each task. The exam is then built to assure that the important functions of an EMT are evaluated.

The 2004 National EMS Practice Analysis will be published in the first quarter of 2005. For more information, check the NREMT web site at www.nremt.org.

NREMT Establishes an EMS Research Fellowship

Following a rigorous selection process, Jonathon Studnek, a Paramedic from Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been appointed as the NREMT's first Research Fellow. Studnek holds a Bachelor's degree in EMS from the University of New Mexico and is pursuing a graduate degree in Public Health and Epidemiology at The Ohio State University.

The NREMT developed its research program to address a need identified by the *EMS Research Agenda for the Future*. The Agenda cited a lack of career EMS researchers as one of the major impediments to the EMS research. The NREMT's program will help build a cadre of career EMS researchers and will provide a unique combination of mentorship, research and education.

"We were very pleased at the response to the posting for our first fellowship," said Gregg Margolis, associate director, NREMT. "We had many highly qualified individuals express an interest, making the selection process extensive and highly competitive."

The NREMT is now in the process of selecting a second EMS Research Fellow to begin graduate school in the fall.

NREMT Board Establishes Standards for CPR and ACLS Courses

The NREMT Board of Directors has passed new standards for CPR and ACLS courses required for initial testing or re-registration. **This change will take effect for registrants due to re-register on March 31, 2007.**

The new standards are in response to the significant increase in the variety of CPR and ACLS courses that Nationally Registered EMTs are taking to satisfy their re-registration requirements.

The NREMT will consider a CPR course valid only if:

- The individual was examined and physically performed competently in Adult (1 and 2 rescuer) CPR and FBAO, Child CPR and FBAO, Infant CPR and FBAO, and AED use.
- There was an individual written examination.

- Course records are maintained.

The NREMT will consider an ACLS course valid only if:

- The individual was examined and performed competently in the management of respiratory arrest, witnessed VF treated with an AED, shock-resistant VF/pulseless VT, asystole, pulseless electrical activity (PEA), acute coronary syndromes, bradycardias, unstable tachycardias, stable tachycardias, acute stroke.
- The individual demonstrated the ability to serve as a team leader for a simulated cardiac arrest (mega code).
- There was an individual written examination.
- Course records are maintained.

Leon Gross Recognized for 17 Years of Service



The NREMT recognized Leon Gross, Ph.D., with a plaque for 17 years of service as the organization's lead psychometric consultant. Psychometrics is the art and science of measuring a person's knowledge and ability. Dr. Gross is an expert in psychometrics and setting standards for precisely evaluating minimum competency using criterion-based examinations.

Dr. Gross began his tenure with the NREMT in January 1987. He also serves as the director of psychometrics and research for the National Board of Examiners in Optometry and has consulted with nearly 30 health certifying organizations.

In the National Registry's migration to computer based testing, Brian Bontempo, Ph.D., of Mountain Measurement, Inc., will be our new psychometric consultant. Dr. Bontempo is a specialist in the use of Item Response Theory, which is the basis for the type of computer based testing being implemented.

Cason Elected to NREMT Board of Directors



The Board of Directors for the NREMT has elected Debra Cason, RN, MS, EMT-P, to serve as EMT-at-large for a four-year term. Cason is program director and associate professor of emergency medicine education at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

As EMT-at-large, Cason, who has been an EMT-Paramedic for 27 years, will be responsible for assuring that the interests of Nationally Registered EMTs nationwide are reflected to the Board.

Cason has served on committees for numerous local, state and national associations, including the Committee on Accreditation for EMS Professions, the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Educational Programs, the National Association of EMTs, the National Association of EMS Physicians and the National Association of EMS Educators.

In addition to her work as an EMT-Paramedic and an educator, Cason is a registered nurse and a published author. Cason holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Baylor University and a Master of Science from the Texas Woman's University.

Community Relations Manager Added to NREMT Staff

Christina Fitzer joined the NREMT in December 2004 as community relations manager. In this newly created position, Fitzer will develop and implement NREMT's communication and community relations strategies to build stronger relationships with the communities it serves, including state EMS offices, EMT education providers and EMTs.

Prior to joining the NREMT, Fitzer served as communication manager for the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, where she developed and implemented the organization's communication and media relations strategies. She has served also as public relations specialist for the Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism and media specialist for Ascent Solutions Inc. (now PKWARE, Inc.), a computer software development company in Dayton, Ohio.

Fitzer holds a Bachelor's degree in communication from the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio.

Politis Honored for NREMT Board Service



At its November 2004 Board of Directors meeting, the NREMT presented outgoing board member Jonathan Politis, NREMT-P, Chief of EMS for the Town of Colonie, NY, with a plaque recognizing his eight years of dedicated service as EMT-at-large to the NREMT's Board of Directors. He began his tenure on the NREMT Board on Jan. 1, 1997, and concluded on Dec. 31, 2004.

Politis was also one of the first National Registry representatives, administering exams since 1981. In addition, he served as the Registry's appointed board member to the Committee on Accreditation for 11 years.

The National Registry of EMTs has participated in a number of research projects over the past year. Below is a partial list of abstracts and articles that included NREMT staff and/or data.

- Margolis, G.S., Wagoner, R.L. The Relationship between High School Class Rank and Performance on the Paramedic National Certification Written Exam. Oral and poster presentation at the National Association of EMS Educators Symposium, September 2004.
- O'Keefe, M., Levine, R. Terrorism Response Training for Emergency Medical Technicians since September 11, 2001: A Nation Unprepared. Poster presentation at the American College of Emergency Physicians Research Forum, October 2004.
- Margolis, G.S., Dickison, P.D. The Relationship between Paramedic Instructor Qualifications and Student Performance on the National Certification Written Exam. Poster presentation at the National Association of EMS Physicians Annual Meeting, January 2005.
- Macdonald, D., Cone, D., Bogucki, S. Occupational Injuries and Health Maintenance in EMS. Accepted for poster presentation at the National Association of EMS Physicians Annual Meeting, January 2005.
- Pirralo, R.G., Levine, R., Dickison, P.D. Behavioral Health Risk Factors of U.S. Emergency Medical Technicians: The LEADS Project. Accepted in February 2005 for publication in *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, pending revisions.
- Studnek, J., Margolis, G.S., Levine, R. EMTs and Paramedics Ratings of the Perceived Effectiveness of EMS Workforce Retention Strategies. Accepted for oral and poster presentation at the EMS Today Conference & Exhibition, March 2005.
- Studnek, J., Margolis, G.S., Levine, R. The Relationship between Organizational Policy and EMT Seat Belt Use. Accepted for poster presentation at the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine Annual Meeting, May 2005.

