FAQ Frequently Asked Questions

By Mattie Mendoza and Phil Lockwood

Q: ***I want to become an EMT Instructor. Which courses does the Texas Department of State Health Services recognize for Instructor certification?***
A: According to Policy P09-a, effective January 1, 2010, the following training programs are approved by DSHS for EMS instructor certification: (1) the National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE); (2) the Texas Commission on Fire Protection; and (3) the United States Military Instructor Training Course. Effective January 1, 2010, the department will approve other methods of teaching instructor courses that are based only on the Department of Transportation National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) current instructor curriculum.

DSHS offers the NAEMSE class at the annual Texas EMS Conference. This year the class will be held November 20 to 22, 2009, in Fort Worth at the Omni Fort Worth Hotel. For registration information for the NAEMSE course or to find out whether the class is full, call (512) 759-1720, or you can register online at www.texasemsconference.com.

Q: ***I submitted my EMT Renewal application on the first of this month, and it is now the 15th. Should I call the EMS Certification unit to see if there is a problem with my application?***
A: Not necessarily. Once you submit your application, it goes to the DSHS fiscal office, where all fees are processed. After approximately five to seven *business* days, the fee process is complete and your application is sent to the EMS Certification office. Once there, applications are reviewed in the order in which they are received by EMS Certification staff. The entire process can take **four to six weeks**. If your application is incomplete, or if you have a criminal history that must be evaluated, that time frame will be extended. You can always check your certification on our website, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/NewCert.shtm.

Q: ***I am about to complete an initial EMT course and was told by the instructor that I need to submit an initial EMT application to DSHS, but I don't have my course completion number or National Registry number yet. Can I still submit the DSHS EMT initial certification application?***
A: Yes. You can submit the application prior to completing your EMT course or before you have your National Registry number. You can submit the application by printing it from our website and mailing it in with a check, or you can submit the application electronically and pay with an electronic check or credit card. If you don't have the course completion number or National Registry number yet, just leave that line blank. After your application is reviewed (approximately four to six weeks), you will receive in the mail what is commonly referred to as a deficiency letter, requesting the missing course number or National Registry information. Then, when you have taken and passed the National Registry exam, National Registry will send DSHS EMS Certification your results. If you received notification that you have passed the National Registry exam and DSHS hasn't received your NR score yet, you can notify the EMS Certification office directly, and we can complete and approve your application. You can find the initial EMS certification application on our website at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/certapps.shtm. If you have any additional questions, you can contact the EMS Certification office at (512) 834-6700.

Q: ***I am attempting to renew my EMT-B certificate using the TxOnline electronic application system, but I keep getting an error message that states my license information does not match the information in the database. Why am I getting this error message?***
A: You could encounter this message for a few different reasons. But the most common problem is that applicants assume the system is prompting them to enter a social security and Texas driver's license number. In fact, the system is asking for your social security number and your *EMS* license number (a.k.a., your EMS personnel ID; EMS certification number), **not** your driver's license number. If you continue to see the error message, please verify that you accurately entered these numbers. Ensuring that you have entered the correct information should resolve the issue. If you have more questions, please call the EMS Certification office at (512) 834-6700.

Q: ***I saw that HB 2845 passed in the last legislative session. I know this bill regulates the criminal history prescreening of persons interested in attending an EMS training class and intending to seek EMS certification/licensure. Is this prescreening available now?***
A: No. It takes quite a while to develop guidelines and complete the DSHS rulemaking process, so the statute allows until 2010 for implementation. The effective date of the new rule and prescreening availability is predicted to be June of 2010.

Q: ***Will the criminal history prescreening authority affect all applicants? Is there a fee for prescreening, or is it included in the application fee?***
A: We **do not** recommend that all candidates submit a petition for prescreening. Prescreening should be applicable only to those who have a criminal offense *and* who are unsure about whether it will bar them from

being certified. A fee of $50 will be assessed for processing prescreening petitions. The prescreening petition and the certification application are separate and distinct processes. Prescreening should be requested prior to course enrollment, as it may help avoid expenses for tuition in cases where the candidate would be found ineligible for certification.

Q: ***I heard that the law now specifically addresses certain serious offenses listed in the Code of Criminal Procedure. What are the offenses, and how would it affect my prescreening if I've been convicted of one of them?***
A: For all practical purposes, conviction for a listed offense would remove the need for you to petition for prescreening—it would be a foregone conclusion that you could not qualify for certification with one of those offenses on your record. The statute calls for revocation of certification/licensure for anyone who has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication, community supervision or deferred disposition for offenses listed in the Code of Criminal Procedure, Article 42.12, Section 3g (a)(1)(A)-(H). These offenses are (1) murder, capital murder, indecency with a child, aggravated kidnapping, aggravated sexual assault, aggravated robbery and substance abuse offenses for which the sentence was increased due to being committed in a drug free zone, involving the use of a child in the commission of the offense, or involving sexual assault; or (2) an offense for which the person is required to register as a sex offender.

Q: ***I read that legislation now prohibits the state from considering criminal history information for applicants whose crime history has previously been evaluated. When does this take effect?***
A: That's not exactly correct. Passed in the last legislative session, HB 846 addresses the review of criminal histories for renewal candidates. More accurately, it neutralizes any implied mandate for candidates to submit redundant information (i.e., unchanged information previously submitted) about their criminal history as a requirement for certification/licensure renewal. Information regarding any offenses committed or sentences received subsequent to the last review, or previously submitted information that has changed or been determined to be incorrect, incomplete or unclear may still have to be (re)submitted. Per the statute, implementation begins for renewal applications received on or after January 1, 2011.

Q: ***When I was at the last GETAC meeting, the council discussed a review schedule for EMS and Trauma Systems rules. I don't mean to be a pessimist, but there's no way you're going to be able to stick to a schedule—legislation, disasters and perpetual conflict result in never-ending debate. Am I wrong?***
A: Whoa! Thanks for the pep talk, dude. Actually, most of the problems you highlight are the very reasons *why* we developed a schedule. The rather deliberate administrative procedures of rulemaking require that we routinely initiate and methodically consider an assortment of rules far in advance. And we must review rules in multiple stages simultaneously. Perfect compliance with rigid timelines may be "pie in the sky," but following a moderately fluid, publicized schedule could actually stem some debate by providing lead time for stakeholders to research and resolve conflicts in advance. Conversely, *lack* of interest is also a key consideration, as some rules haven't piqued anyone's interest or been considered for years on end. Government Code 2001.039 prohibits us from kicking those cans down the road and requires a decision every four years on whether to repeal or continue each of our rules. Even rules that are intended to continue require at least a small revision or update in order to establish a current effective date. The proposed schedule has built-in buffers and will remain reasonably flexible to account for delays due to legislation and/or disasters. A spreadsheet of the schedule will be perpetually posted (but routinely updated) on the GETAC webpage at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems. Click on "Governor's EMS/Trauma Advisory Council."

Q: ***I like the idea of a rule review schedule, but the schedule proposed at the last GETAC meeting looks a little un-ambitious to me. Can't you review and revise rules at a quicker pace than 13 to 18 months?***
A: Interestingly, we've had about an equal number of comments that predict the schedule is too ambitious (see previous question). Our plan is for the rules to appear on the agenda of three consecutive GETAC meetings in the various stages of review (concept, draft and proposal), accounting for about six months. After GETAC and other stakeholders have reviewed the rule, the Health & Human Services Commission's (HHSC) review/approval process routinely takes about ten to twelve months. Like GETAC, the State Health Services Committee (SHSC) that reviews department rules meets only four times a year, but the overlap in meeting times can affect the overall timeline. An example diagram of the rule review process flow and timeline is posted at www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/RuleFlow-GETAC-HHSC.pdf.