

EMT AND FIRST RESPONDER TESTING IN WASHINGTON STATE
Transition to the National Registry of EMT's Exam
Frequently Asked Questions
11/20/08

As Washington moves to the National Registry of EMT's (NREMT) test as the certifying test for EMS personnel, a number of questions arise. While this does not answer all of the questions, it may help in answering some of the more frequent questions. Please feel free to contact Michael Lopez (michael.lopez@doh.wa.gov) for additional information.

1. Why was this decision made?

The decision to move to the NREMT exam was made, in part, based on the fact that EMS personnel should be tested using most current information. In our changing environment, EMS education reflects current best practice. To fairly evaluate EMS personnel, tests must be up to date, defensible and valid. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the State office and the EMS committees to provide this level of assurance. By moving to the NREMT exam, the Registry ensures testing material is up to date, valid and defensible. The Registry is also responsible for maintaining security of the exam to avoid test compromise.

2. Who made this decision?

The State of Washington EMS and Trauma Care System Strategic Plan has a strategy to review current EMS personnel testing. This involved a review of out sourcing. The Licensing and Certification Committee recommended out sourcing the test based on research by Department of Health staff. The recommendation was then presented to the Governor's EMS and Trauma Care Steering Committee. The Office of EMS and Trauma made the decision to out source the exam function to NREMT.

3. How will the NREMT practical skills exam be administered?

The current practical skills test (appendix 'H') meets the NREMT expectation for practical skills at the First Responder and EMT levels. The State Education TAC recently updated the skills evaluation sheet and this may be used by Senior EMS Instructors. The transition is only for the written part of the certifying examination.

4. Will our people receive a NREMT Certification?

If they pass the NREMT examination, they will receive NREMT recognition. To receive certification in Washington, they must complete the State application process.

5. I heard that the State is requiring EMT's and First Responders to maintain NREMT certification to remain certified in Washington State. Is this true?

No, once you are certified as an EMT or First Responder in Washington State, maintaining NREMT status is up to the individual. The only requirement is to remain current with Washington State Certification by completing Washington State requirements for re-certification.

6. I use the Brady Text book and I have heard that NREMT bases their test on another book is this true?

No, NREMT builds the test based upon the National DOT curriculum. This is the same curriculum we use in Washington with specific objectives amending the curriculum. The NREMT also uses a

practice analysis reflecting what EMS providers actually do in the field. There is no need to change text books because of this move.

7. Why are we doing away with the Ongoing Training & Evaluation program (OTEP)?

We are not eliminating the OTEP program. In fact, if someone participates in an approved OTEP program, they will re-certify in the same manner as they always have. Currently, 98% of EMT's and First Responders who re-certify do so through the OTEP method. The only time someone would be required to take the NREMT test again is if they choose to not participate in OTEP and use the traditional CME method for re-certification. In those cases, the candidate will be required to pass the NREMT assessment examination.

8. Can currently certified EMT's and First Responders take the NREMT exam and receive NREMT certification?

Yes, currently certified individuals may take the NREMT exam. This is optional and not required.

9. Is there a cost associated with the new test?

Yes, there is a cost for taking the NREMT examination. In many communities, new EMT's and First Responders must pay to take the current Washington State exam. These costs vary among communities from no charge at all up to \$45 per person. With the move to the NREMT test, cost will be the same for everyone. Costs for the NREMT exam are as follows: First Responder: \$65, EMT: \$75, Paramedic: \$110.

10. How come Paramedics are not required to take the NREMT test, this seems unfair to First Responders and EMT's?

In Washington State, Paramedics have been required to successfully complete both the written and practical skills NREMT test for a number of years. This transition brings First Responders and EMT's in line with requirements for Paramedics in the State.

11. Can I proctor the NREMT test?

The NREMT exam is proctored and administered by Pearson Vue. Since the test is computerized, candidates must travel to a Pearson Vue or Pearson Vue approved test site. There are 10 sites currently available for candidates in Washington State. They are located in: Bellingham (2 sites), Seattle Northgate, Renton, Yakima, Spokane Valley, Pasco, Coeur d'Alene ID, Lewiston ID, Portland OR. We are working with NREMT and Pearson Vue to identify additional sites. Our focus will initially be on areas in North Central Washington, South Sound and the Olympic Peninsula.

12. Do EMT's and First Responders currently take the NREMT test?

Yes, some do. Currently, 39 DOH-approved EMT training programs in the State are registered with NREMT to take the test. Some of these programs are located in Cowlitz, Pend O'reille, Yakima, Skamania, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Skagit and Thurston counties. In the past two years, over 400 EMT candidates have taken the NREMT test and over 80% have passed.

13. OK, I know this is starting in March, what is the process I use as an SEI to get my students registered to take the NREMT test?

In January, Dr. Gregg Margolis from the NREMT is coming to Washington State. Meetings are being planned in Western Washington and Eastern Washington for Dr. Margolis to provide information on the mechanics of taking the NREMT test. These meetings will allow SEI's to receive all of the information needed to allow their students to take the NREMT test. A meeting announcement has been sent out inviting SEI's and interested parties to attend a meeting in January to be held in Tacoma. A second meeting announcement will be sent out for a February meeting in Eastern Washington.

Additional information is available on the NREMT web site (www.nremt.org) for training program responsibilities and the process to verify candidate knowledge, skills and competency. There is also information for individual who will be registering with the NREMT and the steps for completing the examination process.

14. What is the progress on starting a work group to make this change?

A core group of EMS representatives and educators is conducting a teleconference kick-off meeting during the week of January 12th, 2009. The intent of this kick-off meeting is to develop a work plan, transition time lines and future meeting dates. Following this teleconference meeting, we will identify additional people and extend invitations to specific groups. The meeting schedule will be placed on our website once the schedule has been developed.

For additional information or to ask further questions, please contact Michael Lopez at 360-236-2841 or by email at: michael.lopez@doh.wa.gov.