

Fargo Fire Department Certification Policies and Procedures Manual



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Administration

Section 1 General Information

- 1.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification Program to develop and maintain a certification system for North Dakota Firefighters following the National Fire Protection Professional Qualifications (NFPA) and criteria as outlined by the National Board of Fire Service Professional Qualifications.

Fargo Fire Department Certification program only uses the NFPA Standards to establish firefighter certification qualifications.

List of Tested Standards:

Firefighter I	NFPA 1001
Firefighter II	NFPA 1001
Haz Mat Awareness	NFPA 472
Haz Mat Operations	NFPA 472

- **Reference material for testing the above standards will be taken from the Fundamentals of Fire Fighter Skills Second edition by Jones and Bartlett and the 2004 DOT Emergency Response Guidebook.**

- 1.2 The policies and procedures to certify in the Fargo Fire Department Certification Program are contained in the following guidelines. Questions, clarification, or interpretation of these guidelines should be addressed to:

Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator
637 NP Ave
Fargo, ND 58102
Telephone: 701-241-8132

- 1.3 The Fargo Fire Department Certification Program shall certify persons without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or condition protected by applicable federal and state laws except where Bona Fide Occupational Qualifications (BFOQ) apply.

Section 2 Mission and Goals

- 2.1 It is the mission and goal of the Fargo Fire Department certification program to develop and promote a certification service available to all North Dakota Firefighters.
- 2.2 To improve the performance and coordination of all certification efforts through the development of minimum performance requirements.
- 2.3 To develop competent fire service personnel by establishing minimum training standards in accordance with nationally recognized standards (NFPA).
- 2.4 To establish and maintain valid procedures that measure specific levels of skills, abilities and knowledge consistent with standards approved by the Fargo Fire Department Certification Committee.
- 2.5 To establish and implement a certification program that will ensure complete impartiality, confidentiality and designed in a manner that will safeguard against misuse and abuse.

- 2.6 To establish uniform testing procedures for a consistent means of evaluation.
- 2.7 To continually strive for improvements to the program.

Section 3 Certification Committee

- 3.1 The Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator shall govern and administer the Fargo Fire Department certification program.
- 3.2 The Certification Committee is made up from users of the system representing both paid and volunteer fire departments including members with special expertise (Management, Haz Mat, Technical Rescue, and Union).
- 3.3 Members shall be appointed by the Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator.
- 3.4 Members of the Committee shall serve a three year term.
- 3.5 Members may be re-appointed at the end of their term.
- 3.6 The Certification Committee will function as a liaison to all affected groups, assist with program and examination review, equivalencies as requested, reciprocity of other certifications, certification testers, and respond to challenges and complaints brought forth to them.
- 3.7 The Committee may also act on other certification issues identified or referred to the Committee.
- 3.8 The Committee shall meet a minimum of twice a year. The Chairperson may call other meetings as needed. Two weeks notice of meetings shall be given to all members by the Chairperson. Business and action may be conducted and acted upon by the majority of those present.
- 3.9 Telephone conference calls may be conducted in lieu of additional meetings.

- 3.10 The Committee shall keep minutes of the proceedings at its meetings that record all actions taken.
- 3.11 The Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator will be the Chairperson of the board. A Vice-Chair shall be elected by the board on January of every year to fill in for the Chairperson when absent.

Section 4 Performance Criteria

- 4.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to certify North Dakota Firefighters to the current edition of the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) Professional Qualifications Standards. The program shall be updated within two (2) years of the official date of adoption by the NFPA.
- 4.2 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to certify any individuals in the State of North Dakota who belong to a legally established fire department.

All new Fargo firefighters will start the process in preparation toward certification, as required by the Certification Committee, when they are hired. Haz Mat awareness and Operations are required to receive a certificate for FFI. FFI is a prerequisite to certification testing for FFII.

For three years after the start of Pro Board accreditation, Fargo Fire Department incumbents who have attained the FFI and FFII certification from the North Dakota Firefighters Association and completed Haz Mat Awareness and Haz Mat Operations with a Minnesota Regional Haz Mat Technician instructor will be eligible to test for FFI, FFII, Haz Mat Awareness and Haz Mat Operations certification.

Any new North Dakota Firefighters who start the voluntary process in preparation toward certification will follow the Certification program as required by the Certification Committee, and the AHJ. Haz Mat awareness

and Operations are required to receive a certificate for FFI. FFI is a prerequisite to certification testing for FFII.

For three years after the start of Pro Board Accreditation, State of North Dakota Incumbents who have attained FFI and FFII certification from the North Dakota Firefighters Association and are certified in Haz Mat Awareness and Operations to EPA 40 CFR 311 and OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 will be eligible to test for FFI, FFII, Haz Mat Awareness and Haz Mat Operations certification.

- 4.3 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to make available a listing of the levels available for certification, prerequisites to certifications, source of reference materials and policies related to the certification system.

Section 5 Certification Requirements

- 5.1 All participating agencies and participants shall follow the established certification policies and procedures set forth in this manual.
- 5.2 Each Authority Having Jurisdiction is responsible to ensure that it meets the NFPA 1001 medical and physical ability requirements.
- 5.3 Candidates must be members of a North Dakota Fire Department.
- 5.4 Candidates must be a minimum age required by the Authority Having Jurisdiction.
- 5.5 Candidates applying for certification must have completed the application packet including signed training records/proof of any pre-requisites for the standard tested and a signed affidavit by the Fire Chief or Head of their Department certifying that the candidate has been successfully evaluated and met the minimum job performance requirements (JPR) for live fire training as prescribed in NFPA 1001.

- 5.6 Candidates must pass the written test with a minimum score of seventy percent (70%).
- 5.7 Written exams are required for FFI, FFII, Haz Mat Awareness and Operations. All requirements for each level, including the practical, must be completed before testing for the next level. Haz Mat Awareness and Operations are a requirement to receive a FFI certificate. FFI is a prerequisite to test for FFII.
- 5.8 If a candidate passes either the written or practical testing, but not both parts, the candidate may have up to two years to pass the other portion of the testing.
- 5.9 A second attempt at the written or practical exam may be attempted the next time offered at no expense to the candidate. A fee will be charged for three or more attempts.

Section 6 Record Keeping/Documentation

- 6.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to maintain a record keeping system that ensures the retrievability and the preservation of all certification records for candidates certified in the State of North Dakota.
- 6.2 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to maintain a security system to protect all certification records and information by use of passwords or secured hard copy files.

Section 7 Facilities and Equipment

- 7.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to conduct all testing, both written and skills, in a safe and secure environment adhering to the NFPA 1403 Live Fire Training Evolutions.
- 7.2 All written tests will be conducted in an appropriate room that provides adequate spacing, lighting, and an environment free of distractions. There

shall be no more than two candidates at a 6' table and no more than three candidates at an eight foot table.

- 7.3 All manipulative skills testing shall be conducted with appropriate equipment and a safe environment to allow a fair and equal evaluation.

Section 8 Delegation of Authority

- 8.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program **not** to delegate any part or portion of its certification authority to any agency or entity within the State of North Dakota at this time.

Section 9 Conflicts of Interest

- 9.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program that no individual, entity, or interest group exercise inappropriate influence over the certification system.
- 9.2 All procedures and policies shall be established and administered following appropriate national, state, city and Fargo Fire Department guidelines.

Section 10 Non-Discrimination

- 10.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to make all testing and certifying services available to all of its constituents without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or condition protected by applicable federal laws except where a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) applies.
- 10.2 Any participants who believe they have been harassed have the right and obligation to report the harassment to a program official. The program official shall report the complaint to the Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator/Committee for investigation and response. The City of Fargo Human resources Office will be contacted to assist with any investigations.

Section 11 Requests for Testing Accommodation

- 11.1 All requests for testing accommodations should be directed to the Fargo Fire Department Certification Coordinator to determine what accommodation may be indicated. Accommodations will **only** be made for the written examination and may be in the form of: providing a reader to assist with the exam or by allowing additional time to complete the written exam.

Section 12 Request for Reciprocity

- 12.1 The Fargo Fire Department Certification program will recognize Pro Board, IFSAC and DOD certifications as certified when they are submitted within 5 years from the date they are earned and authenticity verified by the Certification Committee. A fee will be charged for the new certificate.
- 12.2 A person may request a duplicate copy of certification. An additional fee will be charged for the duplicate copy.

Section 13 Recertification

- 13.1 It is the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to not require **recertification** at this time. Individual agencies may require that their members recertify and the program will support these agencies as necessary.

Section 14 Revocation/Suspension/Annulment/Denial of Certification

- 14.1 If a Certification tester observes cheating during an examination, the lead tester will remove the candidate from the testing area. The candidate will be informed of the observation and requested to leave the test site.
- 14.2 The Certification Tester will document the observation of cheating and return the testing material and documentation to the Certification Coordinator for review as soon as possible.
- 14.3 The Certification Committee may revoke, suspend, annul or deny the certification of any participant who:

- a. Makes any intentional material misstatement on application for certification.
 - b. Has been convicted of a felony, capital crime, or a felony plea bargained down to a misdemeanor.
 - c. Falsifies training records or signatures on official documents.
 - d. Intentionally misrepresents or violates the Fargo Fire Department Certification program policies and procedures.
 - e. Intentionally violates proctor's instructions or is observed cheating to dishonestly pass an exam.
- 14.4 Any suspected or reported violations of Section 14.3 will be investigated.
- a. The Certification Coordinator or a special committee will investigate suspected or reported violations as deemed appropriate.
 - b. The purpose of the investigation is to determine whether there has been "conduct in violation" of Section 14.3
 - c. The investigation shall be conducted in a timely manner and in such a way as not to embarrass or demean a department or person.
 - d. The investigation shall begin by notifying the department and individual that an investigation is being conducted. At this time, the purpose of the investigation will be explained to the parties.
 - e. During the investigation, witnesses may be interviewed and evidence collected.
 - f. The investigators shall seek firsthand information. Hearsay (one person's report of what another person said) should be characterized as that and should generally be used only to ask the other person to come forward and heard. No one will be "under oath," but all should be counseled about the value of speaking fairly, accurately and honestly.

g. The final report should be written and signed by the person conducting the investigation and /or committee members. It should summarize, analyze and briefly state the conclusions based on facts.

14.5 If the Certification Coordinator/ Committee believe, following an investigation, that grounds exist for the revocation, suspension, annulment or denial of Certification, the participant shall be given notification of intention to hold a hearing.

a. The written notification shall include the time, date, location and basis for the hearing.

b. Written notification shall be by "Certified Mail" to the participant at the last address furnished to the Certification Board.

c. Based on the findings of the report and hearing, the individual could have their certifications revoked, suspended, annulled or denied.

d. Any participant who has lost and or been denied certification pursuant Section 14, may reapply for certification three (3) years after the date of these actions, unless otherwise specified by the Certification Committee.

e. Upon revoking, suspending, annulling or denying certification of any participant, the participant may be requested to return to the Certification Committee all certificates issued by the Committee.

Section 15 Appeals Process

15.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to ensure participants are provided an orderly and systematic means to present and seek answers to appeals concerning program testing and/or certification procedures without fear of reprisal.

15.2 Conditions under which a person may exercise his/her right to appeal:

a. Non-compliance to written/manipulative testing procedures and policies as outlined in this document.

b. Validity of a test question.

c. Discrimination with regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, disability, veteran status or sexual preference.

15.3 Appeals procedure:

a. Candidates must make an appeal in writing to the Certification Coordinator within thirty (30) working days of the date of the alleged occurrence.

b. The letter must be specific and detailed (name, exam date, type of exam etc.) with regard to the alleged occurrence.

c. The Certification Coordinator will take initial action on appeal following the policies and procedures of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program.

d. The Certification Coordinator must investigate and act on the appeal and notify candidates, in writing, within 30 days of the decision made.

e. If the candidate disagrees with the decision of the Certification Coordinator, he/she may appeal the decision within ten (10) working days to the Certification Committee.

f. The Certification Committee will review the initial appeal and decision by the Certification Coordinator.

g. The candidate will be given an opportunity to state their appeal to the Committee.

h. The Committee may uphold the decision of the Certification Coordinator or reverse the decision.

i. The decision of the Certification Committee is **final**.

- j. A record of all proceedings will be maintained throughout the process.
- k. Once a final decision has been made, all interested parties will be notified in writing.
- l. If a candidate is successful with an appeal and meets all criteria, the candidate will be eligible for certification to the standard tested.

Section 16 Appeals Retesting

- 16.1 If a new candidate is **not** successful with appeal, the candidate would be eligible to test next time offered not exceeding one year. Incumbents would be eligible for next testing period not exceeding one year and falling within their three year window for testing for incumbents.

Section 17 Tester/Evaluator Program

- 17.1 There are three levels of testers:
- a. Tester I is for proctoring written testing.
 - b. Tester II is a Tester I and is certified to evaluate manipulative skills.
 - c. Tester III is a Tester II and is certified to prepare all aspects of the manipulative testing. This includes all set up and actual testing of candidates.
- 17.2 Testers may only test to the standards they are trained to.
- 17.3 To be considered for a position of Tester, an individual must meet the following qualifications:
- a. Be certified as an instructor.
 - b. Be certified to the level they are evaluating.
 - c. Have successfully completed the Fargo Fire Department Tester Certification Workshop.

- d. Have the capacity to objectively evaluate the performance of candidates based on the criteria established by the Fargo Fire Department Certification program.
 - e. Make a commitment to serve as a Tester and be willing to accept evaluation assignments when asked to do so.
 - f. Have a positive commitment to the program and to upholding the program's practices and sign a written agreement indicating knowledge and acceptance of the conditions concerning the administration of testing.
- 17.4 All testers are responsible for the safety of the candidates they are testing by ensuring the use of proper protective clothing and safety procedures.
- 17.5 Tester III will ensure that the facilities, equipment and tools necessary for testing are safe and in good working order.
- 17.6 Testers will not have been involved in the training/teaching process of those they are evaluating for certification.

Section 18 Examination Request Process

- 18.1 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to offer examinations for all levels for which accreditation has been obtained.
- 18.2 Testing shall be made available to all North Dakota Firefighters. At this time, testing will take place in Fargo on pre-determined dates.
- 18.3 Certification examination dates, pre-requisites to testing, scheduled times of the testing, location and registration information will be available on the Fargo Fire Department website (fargofire.com) look under Certification.
- 18.4 Pre-registration is required for all certification examinations. Pre-registration must be made two weeks prior to the exam or with approval of the Certification Coordinator.

- 18.5 Pre-registration shall include an **affidavit** from the Fire Chief or Head of the Department requesting the testing and verifying that the candidate meets minimum educational and physical ability requirements established by the AHJ, that the candidate has completed all **live fire requirements of NFPA 1001** and that the candidate meets the medical requirements of NFPA 1582.

Also, required training records (skill sheets) completed and signed by instructors (for new candidates), proof that pre-requisites for the standard being tested have been fulfilled. Fees for testing must be included. Candidates for FFI must also include current CPR certificate and proof of medical training that includes infection control, bleeding control and shock management.

- 18.6 Upon receipt of 18.5 requirements, all items will be reviewed to determine if all pre-requisites for the standard being tested have been met. The student will be informed of acceptance or denial, and reason why denied by letter and/or a telephone call.
- 18.7 Cancellations must be made at least two days before date of testing for a refund of the testing fees.
- 18.8 Walk in registration for testing is **not** allowed due to the inability to verify that pre-requisites have been met before testing.

Section 19 Manipulative Skills Testing Procedures

- 19.1 Manipulative skills examinations shall be administered to evaluate the practical skill objective of a certification level.
- 19.2 Manipulative skill examinations will be graded on a pass/fail basis.
- 19.3 Only an approved Tester II or III will conduct a manipulative skills examination.

- 19.4 Testers participating in the evaluation process must be certified to the level of certification they are evaluating.
- 19.5 Testers who have assisted in the teaching of a course will not be able to evaluate the students they taught.
- 19.6 Prior to conducting the manipulative skills evaluations, the Certification Coordinator or Tester III will ensure that all equipment that will be used for the testing process is in safe, working condition.
- 19.7 There will be two testers at a skill station. One is the lead tester the other is a safety officer. The lead tester will evaluate the first attempt by the candidate. If the candidate fails that attempt, the safety person would evaluate the second attempt and the first lead tester would become the safety officer for that attempt.
- 19.8 During the evaluation process, candidates will conduct themselves in a safe and professional manner at all times.
- 19.9 If a tester or safety officer observes any conduct that is unsafe or hazardous, the testing process will be stopped immediately and may result in a fail for that attempt.
- 19.10 Candidates will be kept in an area separate and out of view from the testing area with a proctor to ensure that there is no discussion between candidates about the testing stations. Any observed cheating will be dealt with as specified in Section 14 of this document.
- 19.11 Candidates may only leave the holding area with permission from the proctor.
- 19.12 All manipulative skills testing will be conducted following all procedures contained on the manipulative skills tester instruction sheet and the policies and procedures set forth by the Fargo Fire Department Certification program.

19.13 Upon completion of an exam a station skill sheet will be completed and maintained by the lead tester. The sheet will include signatures of tester(s), candidate and the date. Sheets will be put in a sealed envelope and returned to the Certification Coordinator or designee.

Section 20 Written Examination Testing Procedures

20.1 Dates for written exams will be posted on the Fargo Fire Department (fargofire.com) website under Certifications.

20.2 Proctors for the test will be a minimum approved Tester I according to the Fargo Fire Department Certification program.

20.3 Testing locations will be selected based on the lighting, space and the ability to control the environment.

20.4 All testing will begin at the scheduled time so candidates will need to be at the exam site prior to the scheduled examination time.

20.5 All candidates will sign-in at the examination site and show a valid **photo** ID.

20.6 The participants must appear on the test roster in order to be admitted to the test.

20.7 Once registration has been completed and the proctor instructions given, the exam site will be closed and no one will be admitted.

20.8 Participants will be given an allotted time to complete the test.

20.9 During the testing, candidates will be separated from each other and held to the highest standards. There will be no more than two candidates at a six foot table or three candidates at an eight foot table with as much space between them as possible. Observed cheating will be dealt with as specified under Section 14 of this document.

20.10 Written tests will not be copied or graded at the test site.

20.11 All tests will be numbered and accounted for.

20.12 All tests and any scratch paper will be collected from the candidates and placed in a sealed envelope and returned to the Certification Coordinator or designee.

Section 21 Certification Process

21.1 Once a candidate has completed the written and skills examinations, the Certification Office has two weeks to grade and release the results to the candidate and the chief of the department.

21.2 A letter will be generated indicating the scores (pass/fail) and breakdown of the test.

21.3 Exam results will not be given over the phone due to the inability to verify who is asking for results.

21.4 Students will sign a roster at the beginning of each examination site, which contains the following statement:

“I attest that I have met all requirements for certification, and I have given my permission for the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to release my certification status to Chief Officer or his/her designee.” No records will be released without candidate consent or as may be required by subpoena, court order or applicable law.

21.5 If a candidate has received a final grade of 70% or better on the written test and passed the skills testing, they will be awarded a Fargo Fire Department Pro Board certificate with the Pro Board Seal.

21.6 It shall be the Fargo Fire Department Certification program policy to maintain a computerized copy of record for each person certified by the program with the following information:

a. Name of certified candidate

b. Last four digits of social security number. This is a Pro Board identifier.

- c. Candidates last mailing address.
 - d. Test date and certification
 - e. Pro Board Seal number
- 21.7 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to maintain a record keeping system that insures the retrievability and preservation of all certification records for candidates certified by the program.
- 21.8 It shall be the policy of the Fargo Fire Department Certification program to maintain a security system on all certification records with secured files and a password secured data base.

Section 22 Evaluation Tool Management Policy

- 22.1 The Fargo Fire Department Certification program shall maintain a test bank for each of the certification levels offered. Written examinations will be randomly generated by the NFPA objective reference.
- 22.2 Test banks are revised within two (2) years after each change to the appropriate NFPA standard.
- 22.3 In the event that purchased test banks don't meet the NFPA standard the Fargo Fire Department program will generate questions to cover the standard.
- 22.4 All test banks are reviewed by subject matter experts to determine accuracy and validity of each test item. Reliability is determined after a test item has been given at least twenty times. If more than 50% of the questions are have an incorrect response the question will be referred to the Certification Coordinator/Committee for review. If it is determined that a question is unreliable, it shall be corrected or removed from the test bank and replaced with a question referencing the same NFPA objective.

- 22.5 Security of the test banks is assured by a computer password for entry into the program and copies of the test booklets are maintained in a locked filing cabinet until used. Only the Certification Coordinator or designee would have access to the testing materials.
- 22.6 Written tests will be generated annually, or if an exam is compromised.

Section 23 Training and Training Records

- 23.1 The Fire Chief/Head of the Department shall designate the type of training required.
- 23.2 The Fire Chief/Head of the Department has the ultimate responsibility to ensure the citizens, of his/her jurisdiction, that the firefighters are properly trained.
- 23.3 The Fire Chief/Head of Department is responsible for the credibility of the certification program as it relates to their Department.
- 23.4 Training levels for the various levels of certification are those listed in the NFPA Standards for professional Qualifications.
- 23.5 The Fire Chief/Head of the Department or Training Officer has the responsibility for anyone certifying to the Fargo Fire Department Certification program that the candidates applying for certification are adequately trained (including all live fire training required in NFPA 1001) and qualified for the requested level of certification.
- 23.6 The individual fire department is responsible to oversee the completion of each portion of the certification standard in house training record.
- 23.7 The Fire Chief/Head of the Department or Training Officer must sign and date each portion of the certification standard in house training record.
- 23.8 The Fire Chief/Head of the Department or Training Officer must keep the candidates in house training record on file.

23.9 All records of certification are maintained by the Fargo Fire Department Certification program.

23.10 All firefighter certification records are confidential. Only the firefighter and the Fire Chief/Head of the Department may request individual records.