Chapter 01: Applicant Evaluation, Employment and Certification Procedures

adopted - 07/1993; rev - 05/2005, 10/2005, 05/2006 and 10/2007

Purpose

100 This section establishes policy and procedure for certification of emergency telecommunicators.

Policy

101 The board shall certify as emergency telecommunicators those persons who meet the employment guidelines established in accordance with Mississippi Code as Annotated Section 19-5-353.

101.1 Certification under the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program (ETTP) is limited by law to emergency telecommunicators only. An emergency telecommunicator is defined in the statute [Section 19-5-303 (m) and Section 19-5-357 (5)] as any person who is:

1. Engaged in or employed as a telecommunications operator by any public safety, fire or emergency medical agency or public or private entity or business, company or corporation,

2. Responsible for the receipt or processing of calls for emergency services provided by public safety, fire or emergency medical agencies,

3. Charged with the dispatching of emergency services provided by public safety, fire or emergency medical agencies,

4. Responsible for disseminating information relative to emergency assistance by telephone or radio,

5. On duty for an average of eight (8) hours or more per month.

101.2 All emergency telecommunicator applicants **must meet the following guidelines to be employed as an emergency telecommunicator:**

1. Be at least eighteen (18) years of age,

2. Be a high school graduate or obtain a GED (refer to Chapter-01, Section-102, Subsection-102.01, Paragraph-4 for full description),

3. Be a U. S. citizen,

4. Be capable of performing the duties under conditions inherent to the profession (See Appendix, Core Job Descriptions), and

5. Be of good moral character as evidenced among other things by having neither a conviction nor a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, probation, pre-trial diversion or payment of any fine for a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude. Fitness for service as it relates to moral character must be verified by an appropriate background investigation. **(See Background Investigations)**

101.3 Individuals who meet both the definition for an emergency telecommunicator in 101.01 above and who meet the minimum employment guidelines in 101.02 above are eligible to be employed as an emergency telecommunicator.

1. Such emergency telecommunicators must successfully complete prescribed training and obtain certification within a certain time period.

   a. Persons in the employment of any public safety, fire, 911 PSAP or emergency medical agency as a telecommunicator on 1 July 1993, shall have three years to be certified in the minimum training standards courses provided they have been employed by such agency for a period of more than one year prior to 1 July 1993. (Since the Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training became operational in April 1994, the deadline date for these telecommunicators would be April 1997.)

   b. Persons employed for less than one year prior to 1 July 1993 shall be required to have completed all the requirements for minimum training standards within a one-year time period. (Since the Board became operational in April 1994, the deadline date would be April 1995).

   c. Any person hired as an emergency telecommunicator after July 1, 1993 shall complete the minimum training standards within twelve (12) months of their employment or within twelve months from the date that the Board shall become operational. (Since the Board became operational in April 1994, the deadline date would begin in April 1995).

2. The one-year or three-year probationary periods, whichever applies, are cumulative in nature and can not be enlarged by additional or multiple employments. If a telecommunicator transfers from one agency to another prior to certification, the total time served will count toward the one-year or three-year periods. For example, in the case of a one-year probationary period, if a telecommunicator began employment and quit after three months, that person would have nine months remaining upon subsequent employment. The full one-year period may only be reinstated upon a break in service of two years or more.

101.4 The ETTP makes no provision to waive, enlarge, or extend the one-year or three-year periods nor does the Act authorize the Board of Emergency

Telecommunications Standards and Training to waive, enlarge or extend the one- year or three-year periods. The Act does however make provision to penalize agencies that employ emergency telecommunicators without obtaining certification beyond the one-year or three-year periods. These penalties include a loss of emergency telecommunicator powers and authorization to receive a salary. To avoid these penalties, agencies should consider all contingencies in the planning of the evaluation, employment and training of their personnel.

Procedures

102 All emergency telecommunicator employers shall follow these steps in the evaluation, employment and certification of emergency telecommunicators.

102.1 The employing agency must evaluate each emergency telecommunicator applicant to ensure each meets the minimum employment criteria prior to employment. This evaluation must include:

1. A complete background investigation **(See Background Investigations)**. This investigation is a critical factor in determining whether emergency telecommunicator applicants meet the requirements established under the ETTP. The primary purpose of the investigation is to provide the emergency telecommunicator employer with enough factual information to determine that a candidate would ensure the continued public trust in the competence and reliability of the department.

2. The submission of the applicant's fingerprints to the Criminal Information Center of the Mississippi Department of Public Safety as a part of the background investigation. This can only be done through the emergency telecommunications agency's law enforcement parent or through a law enforcement agency which is served by that particular telecommunications agency.

   Note: Non-criminal justice agencies with emergency telecommunicators (i.e., fire, EMS) may be impeded by FBI policy. Such agencies should make every effort to submit fingerprints through the local law enforcement agency (i.e., as part of a public safety contract). Agencies who find themselves unable to submit fingerprints to CIC may obtain a waiver of this requirement until possible state legislation is passed. All agencies are reminded that they must complete a background check. Examples of this may come in the form of local driver's license checks or from calls to previous employers. (See Background Investigations).

   Do not send fingerprints to the Board or to the training course directors. Neither of these entities will forward your applicant's prints.

3. A review of the official Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty, DD Form 214 for all applicants who have military service.

4. A review of appropriate official documents to certify successful completion of high school or the general equivalency degree (GED). High School graduate is defined as graduating from a secondary school in an accredited school district having earned the required Carnegie units and successfully completed any and all subject area testing as specified by the Mississippi Department of Education in the year the diploma was awarded.

   a. Accredited schools include those accredited by the ~~Mississippi~~ Departments of Education from each State, the Private School Association from each State, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) or one of the six regional bodies of the Association of Colleges and Schools.

   b. If an applicant has not obtained a high school diploma from an accredited school, the applicant must obtain a GED through the Mississippi Department of Education or obtain an equivalent score on a GED test administered by the American Council on Education.

   c. Applicants may provide a standardized test score on the ACT of 15 ~~18~~ or higher ~~with component scores of 16 or higher in Math, Reading and English~~ in lieu of a GED score.

5. A review of appropriate official documents to certify age and citizenship.

6. A review of appropriate documents to verify current certification status for those applicants transferring from another emergency telecommunications agency or jurisdiction.

   Telecommunicators who transfer from another Mississippi emergency telecommunications agency with a valid certificate (w/break in-service of less than two years) must continue to meet all the minimum employment standards. Therefore, agencies must conduct a background investigation of all applicants to include those telecommunicators who may already hold certification.

102.2 Once the employer has verified all the minimum employment standards and has employed the candidate, the employing agency shall create and maintain an individual personnel file containing a release of information form signed by the applicant, documentation of the aforementioned minimum employment specifics, and documentation of the background investigation (i.e. official diplomas, birth certificate, DD Form 214, naturalization forms, FBI fingerprint report, etc.). The individual personnel file shall be maintained by the agency as long as the named telecommunicator is employed as an emergency telecommunicator officer within the agency. The agency head shall readily make the contents of the file available to the Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training upon

receipt of a written request.

102.3 **Emergency telecommunications agencies must notify The Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training within thirty days of the date of hire of any emergency telecommunicator.** This notification shall be in the form of an Emergency Telecommunicator Application for Certification. The Board of Emergency Telecommunications Standards and Training will use this forms to determine if the applicant meets the minimum employment and training standards required for certification.

Warning: MCA § 97-7-10 Fraudulent Statements and Representations provides for severe penalties for misrepresentations or fraudulent statements to a Board. This statute authorizes a fine of up to ten thousand dollars ($10,000) and a jail sentence of up to five (5) years. Further, the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program authorizes the Board in MCA § 19-5-353 (8) to cancel and recall any certificate obtained through misrepresentation or fraud.

1. The agency head is responsible for conducting a background investigation. The investigation should reveal whether the applicant is a certified emergency telecommunicator or an emergency telecommunicator who has not obtained certification in Mississippi.

    a. The Application for Certification Form shall be submitted for either telecommunicators who have not obtained certification in this state or telecommunicators who have had a break in service of two years or more. The Application for Certification must be signed by the agency head or an authorized designee.

    b. If the telecommunicator has been certified and has a break in service of less than two years, the agency head must submit an Application for Certification form to transfer the certification. This form must also be signed by the agency head or an authorized official.

    c. Agency heads must designate persons to sign BETST forms in writing. Such authorizations shall be submitted to the Board.

    d. If the applicant for certification is the agency head, (i.e. Chief or director) forms must be signed by the next individual in the chain of command such as a mayor or college dean.

2. To obtain credit for completion of Board-approved training courses, agencies must submit appropriate documentation with the Application Form. Appropriate documentation shall consist of a copy of a training certificate, a score sheet or a letter authenticated by a course instructor. Credit may also be granted for completion of an advanced training course.

3. In all cases where an emergency telecommunicator works in a law enforcement environment, the employing agency must submit an Affidavit for Certification within thirty days. The affidavit lists several questions with a choice of a "yes" or "no" answer for each question. The form explains that answering "yes" may not necessarily disqualify an applicant from certification. Further, the affidavit contains a statement to be signed by the applicant and a statement to be signed by the emergency telecommunications agency head or designee.

   a. **Any question (items 1 - 10) that has a "yes" answer must be explained in writing to the board. All crimes (regarding questions 4 and 5) must be reported. The only exceptions to this requirement are traffic offenses where the fine is less than one hundred dollars ($100.00) and where the applicant has had fewer than four (4) traffic offenses within the preceding twenty-four (24) months. (Excluding drug or alcohol related offenses).**

   b. **Traffic offenses where the fine was more than one hundred dollars ($100.00) or offenses that involve drugs or alcohol must be reported and explained. If the applicant has had four (4) or more traffic offenses within the previous twenty-four (24) month period, the date and disposition of each offense must be listed.**

   c. **All other types of offenses are crimes and must be reported, regardless of the fine, pleas entered, or the adjudication status. This would include but is not limited to cases that are non adjudicated, nolle prossed, dismissed or acquitted.**

   d. Employers may choose to write an explanation on the form itself or enclose a separate sheet if additional space is needed to provide a full explanation. Explanation of crimes or related matters should include date of the offense and the status of the case.

4. Agencies should submit documentation of course training if applicable. No other forms or documents should be sent to the Board unless requested by the staff in writing. Other diplomas, in-service training certificates, birth records, fingerprint cards etc. should be retained in the agency personnel file.

102.4 The Board Certification Section shall review each set of forms submitted to the Board. The Certification Section:

1. Shall determine that all appropriate forms are included.

2. Shall analyze each document to verify certification specifics which the Board must consider in accordance with established policy and procedure.

3. Shall determine the Certification Status of each applicant;

a. Eligible for transfer of current certification (break in service is less than two years) to another emergency telecommunications agency,

b. Eligible for certification after completion of a Board-approved training course, or

c. Not eligible for certification.

4. Shall communicate with the employing agency in writing to clarify information as needed and to inform the agency of the applicant's certification status.

5. Shall track progress toward completion of assigned training of all applicants.

102.5 After the staff has notified the agency head of the applicant's certification status, the agency head must then ensure that all arrangements are made to enroll the telecommunicator in an appropriate training program. Once the applicant has successfully completed the prescribed training and the Board has approved the individual or group of applicants, the staff will distribute certificates and provide reimbursement of authorized expenses.

102.6

Chapter 05: Reimbursement of Training Costs

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Purpose

100 This section establishes the policy and procedures governing the reimbursement of training costs to the emergency telecommunicators' agencies governed by the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program.

Policy

101 The Emergency Telecommunications Training Program created the Board for the primary purpose of developing and implementing guidelines for the selection and training of emergency telecommunicators. Accordingly, the legislature mandated that the Board authorize, but only from such funds appropriated by the legislature, the reimbursement of all expenses associated with successful completion of such training. These include salary, allowable tuition, lodging, meals and travel expenses (if applicable). Reimbursement is authorized only for those agencies and subdivisions of the state who are in compliance with all provisions of the Act to include those policies and procedures established by the Board pursuant to the Act. (Mississippi Code 19-5-355 (1) and 19-5-357 (6))

101.1 While all expenses incurred for the completion of certification and re-certification training shall be fully reimbursed, if at any time a shortage of appropriated funds may become an issue, the priority for reimbursement funding shall be in the following order:

1. basic and EMD training;
2. mandated re-certification training;
3. elective re-certification training; and
4. advanced instructor training.

101.2 Reimbursement shall be allowable for telecommunicators in attendance at Board-approved training programs established at such agencies or institutions as the board may deem appropriate.

101.3 A host agency*/instructor* must submit a "Course Certification Request" form to the Board for pre-approval of a course, course location and estimated costs. This information ~~should~~ *must* be sent ~~in three months~~ *thirty (30) days* prior to the date of the course.

101.4 The employing agencies of course students must meet the following requirements in order to be eligible to receive reimbursement:

1. agency must be an organization of the state or a political subdivision of the state;

2. telecommunicators attending training must work a minimum of eight (8) hours within a 30-day period;

3. agency must have adhered to the selection and training standards established by the board;

4. all administrative requirements must have been completed pursuant to this Policy and Procedures Manual to include all forms completed in full; these include the **Application for Certification (Parts I, II and III), Eight-Hour Field Observation and the Reimbursement Worksheet**; and

5. agency must have settled all accounts with the institution or location where training was conducted.

101.5 For the duration of training, the location of the institution shall be the assigned place of duty. Allowable costs of training as established by the Board are as follows:

1. **Tuition costs** shall be reimbursed at an amount ~~not to exceed that which is allowed by the respective national training programs~~ *set by the Board*. The Board will review the costs for the training programs every six months and make any adjustments to the tuition allowance as needed. *Tuition allowance includes all costs relating to instruction, such as, training materials, supplies, facility costs and instructor expenses*.

2. **Subsistence costs,** which include lodging and meals, shall be eligible for complete reimbursement as long as they do not exceed the maximum daily allowance permitted under state law.

3. The authorized **base salaries and other pay benefits** of emergency telecommunicator students and instructors are eligible for reimbursement for the period of the training courses. The salaries shall be computed based on the gross weekly salary of the most recent full month prior to course completion. Reimbursement includes compensation for a standard 40-hour week and will only be authorized for salaries paid for the performance of telecommunications duties. Courses completed after one-year from date of hire or after the three-year certification period will not be reimbursed salary costs.

4. **Travel expenses** shall be determined by multiplying the standard state mileage rate times the mileage for one round trip (and subsequent round trips if commuting). Agencies with more than one student enrolled in a course will be expected to car pool (up to four people per vehicle) and will receive travel for one vehicle.

5. **The board shall provide training reimbursement for all required mandated training only if the training program satisfies the requirements.** The board will designate the

appropriate training program for certification purposes. If an applicant completes a course other than the designated course, the applicant will not be certified and the agency will not be reimbursed for training costs.

6. Only successfully completed Board-approved training programs are allowable. The following programs and their areas of specialty have been approved by the Board.

   a. Either the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) 40-Hour Basic course or the National Emergency Communications Institute (NECI) 40-Hour Basic course, or the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) 40-Hour Basic course is required to be certified as a Law Enforcement or Fire Service telecommunicator.

   b. Either the National Academy of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) 24-hour, the APCO EMD 32-hour, the NECI EMD 24-hour or the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) 24-hour EMD program is required to be certified as an Emergency Medical telecommunicator.

   c. The Mississippi Emergency Telecommunicator 16-hour Re-certification Course is required to be completed in the third year of certification.

   d. Elective training is required to be completed any time within the three-year certification period. Those courses or training exercises not normally offered by approved vendors shall be requested for approval by the Board staff in advance.

7. The Board will not reimburse the training costs of partially completed training or failed training. Telecommunicators may return after additional preparation to attempt to complete the course requirements.

Procedure

102 The Board staff shall review all the information available on each telecommunications class and determine the eligibility and amount of reimbursement to each agency.

102.1 The staff shall maintain a running balance of available funds which come from a service charge of Five Cents ($.05) which is placed on each subscriber phone line within the State of Mississippi as of July 1, 1993 (Mississippi Code 19-5-357 (1)). The proceeds generated shall be primarily used to fund the minimum standards training program for public safety telecommunicators within the State. (Mississippi Code 19-5-357 (5))

102.2 The certification course instructors shall provide the staff an official roster of students within five working days of the day the class ends. The roster shall include the name, social security number and agency of each student.

102.3 The course instructors shall notify the staff of any withdrawals or dismissals from training during the course of the program. The notification shall include whether the telecommunicator withdrew or was dismissed and the reason (i.e. deficiency in academics). If the telecommunicator was dismissed for a violation of course rules and regulations, the course instructor must provide a written report of the investigation into the incident.

102.4 Once the class is completed, the course instructor shall prepare a course roster which shall positively indicate that all students have met the course requirements. Once the students complete the requirements, the course instructor shall notify the staff in writing. This notification must be received prior to any further certification processing or reimbursement.

102.5 The agencies in which the newly-trained emergency telecommunicators are employed shall submit a Reimbursement Worksheet to the Board completely filled out, signed and dated upon completion of the course.

102.6 The staff will determine the amount of the reimbursement based on the total of: board-approved training costs, the applicant's documented base weekly salary and benefits, round trip mileage from the agency to the course location and lodging and meals (if applicable). Reimbursement, not to exceed the maximum daily allowance under state law, will be determined by the presence of all required forms, information and compliance with the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program.

102.7 After determining eligibility and amount of reimbursement, the board staff shall complete a Claim for Reimbursement form and submit the form to the agency head for review. The form shall contain the name and other personal data of the trainee, course attended, tuition, salary and travel costs (meals and food if applicable). The agency head shall review the form, sign and return the form within five working days of receipt. Any discrepancies, corrections or misinformation on the form should be annotated/corrected and the form returned unsigned. The staff shall correct the form and return it to the agency. It is imperative that this form be processed without delay as it is the basis for any funds the agency receives.

102.8 The staff will submit the Claim for Reimbursement to the Department of Finance and Administration for payment. The Board will maintain a copy of the claims and the warrants of payment in the board files.

102.9 Agencies should receive payment within forty-five (45) days of returning the Claim for Reimbursement form. If not, notify the Board staff.

Chapter 07: Standards for Successful Completion of the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program

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Purpose

100 This section establishes policy and procedures governing the standards to be used by accredited training instructors in determining what constitutes successful completion of the Emergency Telecommunications Training Program for state certification.

Policy

101 The Board-approved Emergency Telecommunications Training Program shall include either classroom activity or an equivalent computer-based, internet-based or self-paced program, and subsequent field observation (ride-along). Agencies shall understand that classroom activity shall be the preferred means of receiving training. As well, the Board recognizes that the aforementioned alternative methods of delivery are acceptable when a formal class is not an option. Standards for successful completion of the ETTP program include:

101.1 A passing academic score as determined by the course vendor,

101.2 First-hand experience of field observation in an 8-hour ride along in a respective vehicle area of certification (law enforcement, fire or emergency medical). Those agencies which do not allow a telecommunicator ride-along with a field training officer, shall provide an alternative orientation program.

101.3 Failure to complete all of these standards will render the student ineligible for certification as an emergency telecommunicator until the deficiency has been corrected. The ETTP program must be completed as a whole unit of training. If individual portions of the training are not successfully completed within the one-year time period, the employer shall be personally responsible for that individual's salary. The sequence of completion of 101.01 and 102.02 is not important.

Procedures

102

102.1 **Admission/enrollment and alternative course documentation procedure**

1. For classroom training, the course instructor or host agency shall be charged with the registration of students into the respective basic and emergency medical dispatch (EMD) classes. Registration shall include those students who currently perform telecommunicator duties with a public safety, law enforcement, fire or EMS agency.

2. For alternative training, such as an equivalent computer-based, internet-based or self-paced program, prior approval of the vendor/provider is required. The telecommunicator supervisor or agency head must document that the student took said course and shall provide a copy of the training certificate from the vendor.

102.2 **Readmission procedure**

1. Any student who is dismissed or voluntarily withdraws from a basic or EMD training course may be eligible for readmittance for training at a future date as long as it is within the one-year period of the date of employment.

102.3 **Academic** Students must achieve a final passing academic score as determined by the vendor to successfully complete the basic and/or EMD course.

1. The course instructors, or the administering supervisor in the case of alternative training, shall administer the appropriate vendor test plan to evaluate the student's retention of knowledge attained in the course.

   a. The test plan for the law enforcement and fire telecommunicator certification must include all of the essential areas of one of the following Board-approved basic courses:

      i. Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) 40-Hour Basic course;

      ii. National Emergency Communications Institute (NECI) 40-Hour Basic course.

      iii. National Academies of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) 40-Hour Emergency Telecommunicator Course

   b. The test plan for the emergency medical telecommunicator certification must include either of the APCO Basic, ~~or~~ NECI Basic ~~(beginning Oct. 1, 2001)~~, *or NAED Basic* as well as all of the essential areas of one of the following Board-approved EMD courses:

      i. APCO 32-hour "Basic EMD Certification Course",

      ii. NECI 24-Hour "Emergency Medical Communications Officer" course,

      iii. National Academy of Emergency Dispatch (NAED) 24-hour EMD course,

      iv. U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 24-hour Emergency Medical Dispatch course.

2. The test plan must ensure re-dress of missed questions for each student. This effort will be directed toward making the student academically self-sufficient after the training program.

3. Any student who fails to achieve a passing academic average as determined by the course vendor will not be allowed to attain state certification. Students who are dismissed from a training course for academic reasons may re-enroll in the next available class.

102.4 **Scoring Procedures**

1. For classroom training, all testing mechanisms shall be scored under supervision of the course instructor using proscribed procedure. For alternative training, the course vendor is responsible for scoring tests and the telecommunicator supervisor responsible for documenting such.

2. Students shall be given feedback on their performance for every graded event. Missed answers shall be covered with each student.

3. All scores shall be reported to the Board.

102.5 Every student who successfully completes any type of training course will receive a vendor certificate, signed by the course instructor and/or other appropriate official, which evidences successful completion of the course. In addition, the course instructor or course vendor will send a copy of *the vendor certificate and* the course roster to the Board for purposes of state certification.

102.6 **Field Observation** Field observation (ride-along) is required of all Emergency Telecommunicators. The field observation may be conducted with the Telecommunicator's local agency provided there is adequate call volume and activity to provide an effective learning experience. In communities with less activity, consideration should be given to attaining field observation experience with more active agencies. The field observation (ride-along) should provide an overview of regulations and standard field operating procedures, recommendations pertaining to emergency vehicle operation; provide an understanding of all records and reporting systems and forms utilized by the agency; promote efficient and proper use of all radio communications equipment and systems that the public safety officer or EMT will utilize. A minimum of 8 hours of ride-along with an approved field training officer (FTO) is required for each separate area (law enforcement, fire service and EMS).