

Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council

Position Statement

Continued Use of the NREMT Testing Process in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Emergency Health Services Council (PEHSC), as the statutorily established advisory board to the Pennsylvania Department of Health on matters related to the delivery of emergency medical services, supports Pennsylvania's use of the National Registry of EMT's (NREMT) testing process.

The NREMT was established in 1970 to act as the nation's EMS certification [testing] organization. The NREMT provides a valid, uniform process to assess the knowledge and skills required for competent practice by EMS professionals.

The National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) (EMR) and (EMT) testing have been utilized in Pennsylvania for over 10 years, beginning on Jan. 1, 2013. The practical examinations were administered at Pennsylvania recognized EMS educational institutes/sites by the Pennsylvania Regional EMS Council educational coordinators and/or approved staff. NREMT written examinations were updated to the new National EMS Education Standards were administered from Jan. 1, 2013, until implementation of the basic level NREMT cognitive/ computer-based examinations, which became effective Jan. 1, 2014. All examinations were, and continue to be, administered in accordance with the Pennsylvania EMS Act. The emergency medical technician-paramedic (EMT-P) examination continued to be administered, until transitioning to the NREMT paramedic (P) level with the new National EMS Education Standards as of Jan. 1, 2013.

PEHSC supports the continued use of the NREMT's testing process for the following reasons:

- The NREMT, as recommended by the Commission on the Accreditation of EMS Programs (CoAEMSP), is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.
- Utilizing a national exam provides access to online educational resources and practice tests in preparation for the NREMT computer-adaptive exam.
- The NREMT testing process is utilized by 48 of the 50 states. It provides data on a state's pass/fail rates and a comparison of state performance vs. the nation for each exam level.
- Emergency medical services must have a valid, uniform national exam to further its pursuit in being recognized as a healthcare profession. As such, the NREMT provides a valid, uniform testing process for all levels of certification recognized in the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National EMS Scope of Practice Model.
- On July 7, 2022, Pennsylvania became a member of the national Recognition of Emergency Medical Services Personnel Licensure Interstate Compact (REPLICA). The EMS Compact facilitates the day-to-day movement of EMS personnel across state boundaries in the performance of their duties. EMS personnel (EMR, AEMT, EMT and Paramedic) licensed in a compact member state, are granted a *Privilege to Practice* in the other compact member states. Use of the NREMT testing process is a core requirement for compact members and abandoning NREMT testing would require Pennsylvania to withdraw from REPLICA. A withdraw would also have a negative impact on returning military service members who have obtained national registry certification while on active duty.

- According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health the cost for Pennsylvania to produce a valid, uniform testing process is estimated to be between \$2M-\$2.5M. This funding would be drawn from the existing Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund (EMSOF), which also provides direct provider support and funding for the regional councils and PEHSC. Due to inflation, system costs exceed revenues resulting in a reduction of funding for special projects and system administration. In addition to the cost factor, it would take several years to develop and implement a valid testing instrument and exam process.
- Pennsylvania’s overall pass rates for ALS and BLS candidates are comparable to the national pass rate according to the NREMT. The goal is for Pennsylvania’s pass rate to be consistently higher than the national pass rate.
- According to Department of Health data, the overall pass rates for the NREMT exam are higher than the previous in-state tests derived from the Mid-Atlantic Testing Consortium.

Testing metric	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
PA EMT overall pass rate	78%	77%	79%	79%	76%	72%
National EMT overall pass rate	82%	81%	82%	80%	78%	79%
EMT successful completion	2,084	1,964	2,135	2,363	1,963	1,821
PA paramedic overall pass rate	83%	84%	88%	93%	88%	82%
National paramedic overall pass rate	89%	90%	90%	89%	83%	83%
Paramedic successful completion	227	167	200	197	195	161

Source: National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians, 2022

PEHSC recommends the following EMS educational institute initiatives to improve overall pass rates and consumer satisfaction:

- Provide instructional content consistent with the National Education Standards.
- Provide instruction on all psychomotor skills listed in the National EMS Scope of Practice Model, irrespective of whether a particular skill is authorized in Pennsylvania.
- Provide instruction on psychomotor skills that are authorized in Pennsylvania, but not listed in the National EMS Scope of Practice Model.
- Provide professional development opportunities to EMS instructors to ensure instructional content is delivered based on current instructional techniques and consistent with the content expectations outlined herein.
- Establish and enforce minimum student performance standards for both didactic and psychomotor testing.
- Prepare students for the NREMT computer-adaptive exam by delivering periodic quizzes and tests in a computer-based format.

- Prepare student for the NREMT exam by providing instruction on electronic test-taking strategies including, but not limited to, test question analysis, the computer-adaptive testing environment and the exam process as outline in the “Cognitive Exams – General Information” section of the NREMT website¹.
- Support student self-evaluation by providing access to online practice tests.
- Provide an accelerated remediation classes for students who are unsuccessful on the cognitive exam, focusing on identified target areas and reinforcing electronic test taking strategies².
- Promote consumer choice by publicly disclosing information required in Pennsylvania's EMS regulations, Title 28 Section 1025.1 (d).

PEHSC recognizes previously identified barriers related to NREMT testing. The council calls upon the National Registry, accredited educational institutes, and the Pennsylvania Department of Health to work to eliminate barriers that will improve candidate success and satisfaction.

- The Department should identify financial resources to assist EMS training institute in providing online education and practice testing resources.
- The Department should identify financial resources to assist students who were unsuccessful on their first exam attempt with the cost of repeating the electronic cognitive test. In areas identified as rural, consider using stipulated EMSOF rural education funds³.
- The Department should provide, directly or through the regional EMS councils, technical assistance to underperforming EMS education institutes.
- Expand the availability of Pearson Vue testing centers, particularly in the rural portions of Pennsylvania.
- Consider using Pennsylvania’s regional EMS council offices as a testing site.
- The Department should align Pennsylvania’s scopes of practice with the National EMS Scope of Practice Model. However, this alignment should not constrain the addition of a skill that is not included in the national scope model.
- Continue to offer the monitored online testing option launched due COVID restrictions.
- Make remediation opportunities available for students who did not have first-pass success.

¹ Based on concept developed by the EMS West regional EMS council.

² *ibid*

³ Act No. 93 of 2020 (HB 1838 – Rep. Causer)