# National Incident Management System Guideline for the National Qualification System

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

**FEMA**

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# I.   Introduction

The National Qualification System (NQS) supplements the Resource Management component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by establishing guidance and tools to assist stakeholders in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel.

This Guideline is for use by any authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), including all levels of government and organizations, private sector entities, and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) with incident management or support responsibilities. It describes the basic principles of standard qualification, certification, and credentialing processes and introduces primary tools to help AHJs establish their own processes.

Many organizations and jurisdictions have already established processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing incident management and support personnel. This Guideline does not replace these procedures. Rather, it helps AHJs build or refine qualification, certification, and credentialing processes to be effective and consistent nationwide. The qualification, certification, and credentialing processes described in the Guideline are voluntary for all non-Federal entities. This document supersedes the 2011 version of the NIMS Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel.

The NQS national doctrine promotes interoperability by establishing a common language for defining job titles and by enabling jurisdictions and organizations to plan for, request, and have confidence in the capabilities of personnel deployed for disasters and emergencies from other entities through mutual aid agreements and compacts. Following the concepts and processes in this Guideline will enhance national preparedness by expanding the network of qualified incident management and support personnel who can be deployed nationwide.

## II.   National Qualification System Overview

The NQS establishes standard minimum qualifications for specific incident-related positions to provide consistency across the Nation and support nationwide interoperability.[1] Using the NQS approach to qualify, certify, and credential incident management and support personnel ensures personnel deploying through mutual aid agreements and compacts have the capabilities to perform the duties of their assigned roles.

### Concept of Operations

NQS uses a performance-based approach that focuses on verifying the capabilities of personnel to perform as required in the various incident-related positions. This approach incorporates education, training, and experience to build proficiency and establishes performance as the primary qualification criterion. This approach differs from training-based systems, which use the completion of training courses or passing scores on examinations as qualification criteria. A performance-based approach is advantageous over a training-based system because it provides greater confidence of on-the-job performance since evaluators have observed the proficiencies of the individual through their performance of a series of pre-designated tasks.

Figure 1 depicts the continuum of the integrated qualification, certification, and credentialing processes that constitute NQS. A summary of activities for each of the three processes is described below.



**NATIONAL QUALIFICATION SYSTEM**
Qualification, Certification, and Credentialing of Incident Personnel

| QUALIFICATION | CERTIFICATION | CREDENTIALING |
|---|---|---|
| Prerequisites Completed / Position Task Book Completed | Qualification Review and Certification/Recertification | Credentials Issued or Reissued |

**Figure 1: NQS Concept of Operations**

- *Qualification is the process of enabling personnel to perform the duties of a specific position and documenting their proficiency of the capabilities required by the position.* During the qualification process, trainees—individuals seeking to become qualified—meet the prerequisites for the position they are pursuing by completing training courses, obtaining professional or technical licenses and certifications, if appropriate, and meeting the physical and medical fitness requirements established for the position they are pursuing.

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[1] For the purposes of this document, the word "incident" includes planned events as well as emergencies and/or disasters of all kinds and sizes.

- ***Certification is the recognition from the AHJ or a third party[2] stating that an individual has met the established criteria and is qualified for a specific position***. As part of the certification process, a certifying official (CO) and/or Qualification Review Board (QRB) examines the trainee's records of performance and the evidence that the trainee meets all the requirements for the position, including historical recognition, if appropriate. If the trainee meets all requirements, the CO certifies the individual "qualified" for the position.

Please note that the term "certification" in the context of the NQS refers to the AHJ's certification that an individual is qualified for a specific incident-related position. It is distinct from professional certifications and licenses.

- ***Recertification is the confirmation that an individual has maintained his/her qualification for the position.*** The AHJ maintains records regarding its personnel and establishes procedures for the periodic review of these individuals' qualifications and currency in their positions. This may result in a formal periodic recertification or decertification if individuals no longer meet minimum qualification standards or are not current in the position requirements. Recertification periods may vary depending on the position. It is ultimately up to the AHJ to establish the recertification timeframe.

- ***Credentialing is the process of providing documentation that identifies personnel and verifies their qualifications for certain positions.*** Once an individual is certified for a position, the AHJ issues an identification card or badge—a credential—attesting to the identity of the individual and his/her qualifications and affiliations. AHJs determine what kind of identification card, badge, or other identification document to issue. Examples of credentials include, but are not limited to, the basic Incident Qualification Certification System Card, used by some AHJs who support wildland fire responses, and a radio-frequency identification (RFID)-chipped Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card with the capacity to contain significantly more detailed information about the individual.

## NQS Doctrine and Tools

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supports the NQS by providing guidance and tools to assist AHJs and help assure the integrity of the system. Figure 2 depicts the doctrine and tools within the NQS.

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[2] Within the criteria entitled "Professional and Technical Licenses and Certifications," certain positions may require third-party certification and/or credentialing from an accredited body, such as a state licensure board for medical professionals as a component of the overall qualification for the position.
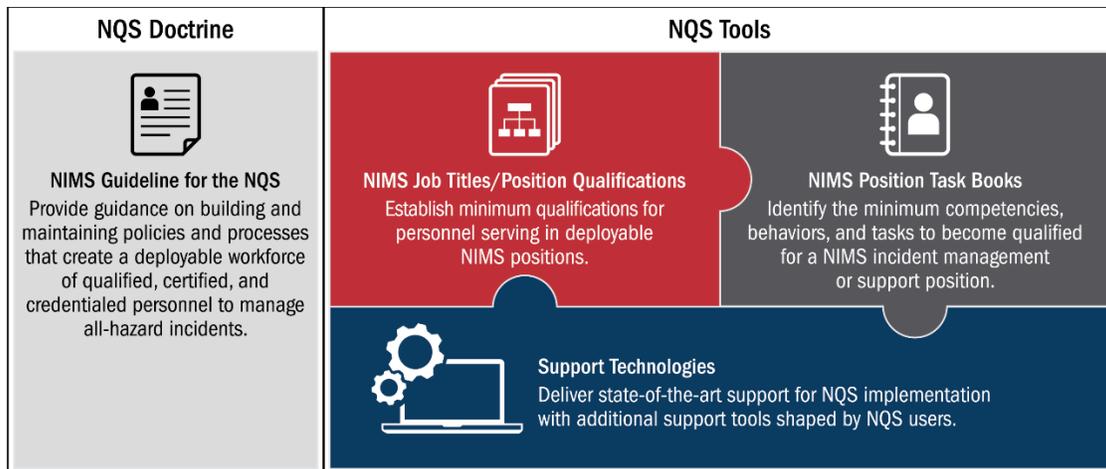
**Figure 2: NQS Doctrine and Tools**

- The *Guideline for the National Qualification System* provides guidance on building and maintaining a process for creating a deployable workforce of qualified, certified, and credentialed personnel to manage and support incidents of all types and sizes.

- A set of *NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications* define the minimum criteria that personnel serving in specific incident-related positions must attain before deploying to an incident. These criteria describe not only required capabilities, but also describe specific education, training, experience, physical/medical fitness, currency, and professional and technical licenses and certifications, when appropriate.

- *NIMS Position Task Books (PTB)* identify the competencies, behaviors, and tasks personnel must demonstrate to qualify for specific incident-related positions. PTBs are a standardized tool for observing and documenting the trainee's performance and are widely used by organizations, associations, and governmental entities to qualify incident management and support personnel. A key tool of the NQS qualification process, PTBs:

  - Provide an observable, measurable, and standardized means to document the trainee's proficiency by describing specific tasks, behaviors, and competencies for each position; and

  - Streamline and standardize the evaluation process by enabling evaluators to observe and document the trainee's performance during qualifying incidents, events, job activities, exercises, or classroom activities.

- *Support Technologies* assist stakeholders in implementing effective qualification and certification processes. For example, the Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLT) is an online catalog containing resource-typing definitions, NIMS Job Titles and their corresponding Position Qualifications, and NIMS PTBs.

## Responsibilities of Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)

The NQS is a nationwide system with dispersed responsibilities among its many partners. While FEMA provides guidance and tools, AHJs are responsible for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing personnel. AHJs are encouraged to implement qualification, certification, and

credentialing processes consistent with NQS guidance to ensure their personnel are prepared to perform the responsibilities associated with their specific incident-related positions.

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**Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)**

AHJ is the NIMS term for entities that have the authority and responsibility to develop, implement, maintain, and oversee the qualification, certification, and credentialing process within their organization or jurisdiction. AHJs include state, tribal, or Federal Government departments and agencies, training commissions, NGOs, or companies, as well as local organizations, such as police, fire, public health, or public works departments.

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AHJ responsibilities include pre-identifying, typing, and qualifying incident management or support personnel based on minimum qualification criteria that align with the NIMS Job Titles /Position Qualifications. Federal departments and agencies may use existing processes within their organizations to qualify, certify, and credential their incident management and support personnel,[3] but these processes should be consistent with NQS doctrine.

The AHJ issues a trainee the appropriate PTB, and the trainee works with coaches to document the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the tasks required for the position. A coach is an individual who provides instructions and mentoring to a trainee.

AHJs may augment the NIMS Position Qualifications minimum criteria to meet specific needs, hazards, or risks within their jurisdiction, organization, or agency. When an AHJ requests a resource through mutual aid, if the resource needs qualifications beyond the NIMS position qualifications, the AHJ documents that requirement as part of the request. Resource providers can use position endorsements to validate individuals' additional capabilities, typically associated with specific hazards that augment the minimum qualifications for the position.

For positions not defined in the NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications, AHJs should use organizational and industry guidelines to type the positions and establish employee qualifications. NQS addresses both incident management and support (e.g., emergency operations centers) positions.

AHJs that do not have an existing process, are qualifying new disciplines, or have limited resources may incorporate best practices from other, more experienced organizations. This process may include leveraging coaches and evaluators from neighboring states, localities, or professional organizations until these AHJs have developed their own cadre of qualified and certified personnel. AHJs may also contact Federal departments and agencies, such as FEMA, for technical assistance.

Prior to developing qualification, certification, and credentialing processes, AHJs should:

- Research comparable processes in similar organizations (government, NGOs, and the private sector),

- Identify all incident-related positions within their organization, and

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[3] 6 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 320 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5).

- Determine the advantages and disadvantages of jointly developing or sharing systems with other AHJs.

## How NQS Supports NIMS Resource Management and Mutual Aid

The Resource Management component of NIMS involves four key activities: typing resources; qualifying, certifying, and credentialing incident management and support personnel; planning for resources; and acquiring, storing, and inventorying resources. NQS guidance and tools support the all-important processes of typing personnel and ensuring they have the ability to perform as needed.

Sharing emergency resources among jurisdictions and organizations is an important emergency preparedness strategy used throughout the Nation every day. Using NQS to certify and credential personnel allows an AHJ to share a common language of defined minimum capabilities with other entities. This common framework makes the sharing of emergency resources through the process of mutual aid both possible and practical.

NQS also supports the development of mission-ready packages (MRP), which are mechanisms used to organize, develop, train, and exercise capabilities prior to an incident. Having qualified personnel who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for their job positions allows an AHJ to identify personnel as part of their MRPs.

Establishing and maintaining both formal and informal mutual aid arrangements enhances preparedness and readiness by enabling communities and organizations to activate, deploy, share, and scale resources rapidly across jurisdictions and organizations. The *NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid* provides additional information on these types of agreements.[4]

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[4] See the NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid. (https://www.fema.gov/resource-management-mutual-aid).

# III.  Qualification Process

NQS qualification is the process of:

- Enabling personnel to perform the duties of specific incident-related positions and meet any other prerequisites established for the positions; and

- Documenting the fact that individuals have demonstrated the capabilities and competencies required for those positions.

Enabling personnel to perform the duties of a particular position occurs through a combination of training, on-the-job coaching, and experience. Generally, one or more evaluators observe, attest to, and document an individual's ability to perform specific tasks as described in PTBs.

Individuals may be qualified in multiple positions. An AHJ determines how many qualifications an individual can hold at one time.

## Qualification Criteria

A key element of developing consistency in positions is establishing minimum criteria that trainees must meet to be qualified in a specific position. To assist AHJs in establishing consistent criteria for positions, the RTLT contains information regarding NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications for the positions that organizations are most likely to request through mutual aid. AHJs can use this information to help determine what education, training, experience, physical/medical fitness, currency, and professional and technical licenses and certifications are necessary for specific positions. NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications in the RTLT also establish minimum criteria to perform in a position in incidents at a particular complexity level.

| Incident Complexity |
|---|
| Incident complexity is the combination of involved factors that affect the probability of control of an incident. Many factors determine the complexity of an incident, including, but not limited to, area involved, threat to life and property, political sensitivity, organizational complexity, jurisdictional boundaries, values at risk, weather, strategy and tactics, and agency policy. Incident complexity is considered when making incident management level, staffing, and safety decisions. Incident complexity is assessed on a five-point scale ranging from Type 5 (the least complex incident) to Type 1 (the most complex incident). |

AHJs can use the NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications captured in the RTLT as a baseline, but they also have the flexibility to expand the qualifications based on the needs or circumstances of their jurisdiction or organization.

Examples of qualification criteria include:

- *Performance*: Completing the PTB required for the position.

- *Education*: Formal instruction based on a curriculum that prepares an individual with the core knowledge, skills, and ability to enter into a discipline and perform job functions.

- *Training*: Courses that must be completed prior to becoming qualified in a position.

- *Experience*: Being qualified for and serving in subordinate and other pertinent positions, measured in terms of time spent applying the specific skills associated with the position.

- *Physical/Medical Fitness*: Physical and medical considerations that, when applied, help to ensure safe performance in potentially hazardous environments. AHJs determine the method of evaluating the physical fitness levels of their personnel; however, the testing method should be a measurable evaluation process. Physical fitness is categorized into four levels:

  - Arduous – Duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time.

  - Moderate – Duties involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods.

  - Light – Duties mainly involve office-type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health.

  - None required – Positions that do not require a physical fitness level.

The following example presents a sample qualification requirement for an emergency medical technician (EMT) position currently posted on the RTLT.

| EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN |
|---|
| **DESCRIPTION:** The primary focus of the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) is to provide basic triage, assessment, and noninvasive interventions to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with acute out-of-hospital medical and traumatic emergencies. This may occur at an emergency scene until transportation resources arrive, from an emergency scene to a health care facility, or between health care facilities. Additionally, the EMT possesses the education and experience in areas of patient care that are commensurate with the patient care mission, providing care to minimize secondary injury, and provide comfort to the patient and family while transporting the patient to an emergency care facility. The EMT level is the minimum licensure level for personnel transporting patients in ambulances. |
| **EDUCATION:** Completion of a state-approved EMT program based on National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) National Standard Curriculum. |
| Recommended: Successful completion of the minimum terminal learning objectives for an EMT as defined by NHTSA National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Education Standards. |
| **TRAINING:** |
| 1. IS-100: Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS) or ICS-100. |
| 2. IS-700: National Incident Management System (NIMS), an Introduction. |
| 3. IS-800: National Response Framework (NRF), an Introduction. |
| 4. HazMat Awareness Training or equivalent basic instruction consistent with: |
|     a. The hazards anticipated to be present, or present at the scene |
|     b. The probable impact of those hazards, based upon the mission role of the individual |

    c.    Use of the personal protective equipment consistent with "Guidance on Emergency Responder Protective Equipment (PPE) for Response to CBRN [chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear] Terrorism Incidents," Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (June 2008).

**EXPERIENCE:** Ongoing, active participation with an EMS-providing entity, organization, or agency.

**PHYSICAL/MEDICAL FITNESS:**

1.    Individuals must be healthy enough to function under field conditions, which may include some or all of the following: 12-hour shifts, austere conditions (possibly no showers, housing in tents, portable toilets), extreme weather conditions (long exposure to heat and humidity, lack of air conditioning, extreme cold, wet environments), or long periods of standing.

2.    Individuals should not require personal medications that require refrigeration.

3.    Individuals should not have any physical conditions, impairments, or restrictions that would preclude them from participating in the moving and lifting of patients and/or equipment and supplies.

4.    Immunizations: Refer to immunization recommendations for emergency responders by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis vaccine; receipt of primary series and booster within the past 10 years; and completion of Hepatitis B Vaccination Series or completion of a waiver of liability.

**PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS:**

Certification: Successful completion of a state-approved program at this level or National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians certification at this level.

Licensing: Active status of legal authority to function as an EMT granted by a state, the District of Columbia, or U.S. territory.

## Position Prerequisites

Incident-related positions require trainees to complete prerequisites, such as training, education, and performance in subordinate positions. For entry-level positions, these prerequisites might only require trainees to complete certain basic incident management classes. More advanced positions might require professional certifications and/or experience as determined by the trainee's discipline. Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) certifications for law enforcement positions, EMT certifications for emergency medical services positions, and structural engineering certifications for Urban Search and Rescue positions are examples of such requirements.

Qualifying for supervisory positions, such as unit leaders, division/group supervisors, task force leaders, branch directors, section chiefs, and Incident Commanders (IC), typically requires years of training and experience. Becoming qualified for these positions also usually requires trainees to have previously qualified for and served in one or more subordinate position(s).

Trainees should meet all prerequisites for a given position before the AHJ issues the trainee the PTB for the position. However, this is not always practical, and AHJs often allow trainees to pursue position prerequisites while working to complete the PTB at the same time.

## Position Task Books (PTB)

The trainee's direct supervisor typically requests issuance of a PTB to the trainee. Once an AHJ issues a PTB, trainees are generally required to complete the PTB within five years; however, many positions are typically completed in significantly less time.

After the AHJ issues the PTB, the trainee works with coaches and instructors to apply the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the tasks required for the position through real world experience or exercises. Evaluators review and sign off successful completion of PTB tasks. However, AHJs may not have enough resources to ensure that every evaluator is qualified in the position being assessed. Therefore, a trainee's supervisor may evaluate the completion of PTB tasks. For example, a Logistics Section Chief has the authority to sign off on completion of observed PTB tasks for a Food Unit Leader trainee.

Once a trainee completes a PTB, the final evaluator signs it, indicating that the trainee has met all PTB requirements for the position. A final evaluator is generally qualified in the same position for which the trainee is applying. While it is preferable to have a distinction between evaluators and the final evaluator, in situations with limited resources, the evaluator and final evaluator can be the same individual. Once the final evaluator has signed the PTB, it is forwarded to the QRB along with supporting evidence that the trainee has completed the other requirements for the position. The Certification Process section describes the process of reviewing trainee submissions. (See Appendix A: Position Task Book (PTB) Guidelines for details on the PTB design and process.)

| Qualifying Exercises |
|---|
| While trainees generally demonstrate proficiency in actual incidents, AHJs may also allow trainees to complete certain PTB tasks in exercises. This action can accelerate the qualification process when opportunities for trainees to perform on actual incidents are limited. Evaluators should ensure that exercises used for PTB task sign-offs simulate the actual conditions under which the trainee would have to perform in an incident. |
| The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) guidance describes various types of exercises, from full scale to tabletop, in very specific terms. HSEEP guidance also provides other valuable information regarding the use of exercises as training. AHJs should define the types of exercises that will be acceptable for trainee PTB task evaluation in terms of the HSEEP definitions. Within the PTB task codes, AHJs should also indicate which tasks trainees may complete through exercises and which ones trainees must demonstrate in actual incidents. |

## Direct Entry Qualification

A fundamental premise of NIMS is that when a given position in an organization is vacant, the individual filling the next higher position in the organization is responsible for the duties of the unfilled position. This is one reason trainees for supervisory incident-related positions should have previously qualified for the positions they manage.

Small jurisdictions or those in the process of establishing a qualification and credentialing program may not have large numbers of personnel qualified in incident management or support positions. Direct entry is an option that allows AHJs to get qualified staff in place quickly. Though firsthand experience in being qualified for subordinate positions is desirable, AHJs may authorize direct entry qualification, which allows trainees who have not had that experience to

qualify for some supervisory incident-related positions (i.e., officer, chief, director, supervisor, or leader).

In such cases, at least some level of experience with subordinates' responsibilities can increase a trainee's likelihood of a successful outcome. Evaluators, final evaluators, training officers, QRBs, and COs screen the historical recognition of direct entry candidates to determine if they meet the responsibilities of the position before recommending or granting qualification and certification. AHJs should limit direct entry to Type 3-level positions and below. Another best practice is to impose a time limit on the period for direct entry to ensure currency in the qualifications of the individual.

## Portability of Qualifications

AHJs should develop a process to transfer and accept an individual's qualifications to or from another jurisdiction or organization. Using NQS guidelines increases the chances that the new AHJ or sponsoring agency will accept the trainee's qualification from a previous AHJ. Ultimately, the receiving AHJ determines the requirements for transferring qualifications.

# IV. Certification Process

Certification is the AHJ's final and official documentation indicating that an individual is qualified to perform in a specified NIMS position.[5] Certification of personnel helps to ensure they possess a minimum level of education, training, experience, physical and medical fitness, and capabilities appropriate for a particular position.[6]

Individual certifications can be listed in various databases used by state/local governments, such as the Incident Qualification System (IQS), or the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) that many Federal agencies use. Many states use automated incident support systems to capture and manage lists of qualified and/or typed resources. These systems provide agencies that are requesting personnel with a faster, more centralized method for obtaining resources.

## QRB Evaluation

AHJs frequently use a committee or board structure to assist in the certification process. QRBs review an individual's qualifications against the criteria for a particular NIMS position. NGOs and private sector organizations, in particular, may need to convene QRBs with personnel from other professional organizations or associations, local businesses/organizations, or a local jurisdiction's QRB.

| Benefits of the Diversity of QRBs |
|---|
| The composition of a QRB should be diverse to promote an inclusive approach and reduce the potential for perceptions or occurrences of favoritism and unequal treatment of individuals during the qualification process. For example, at the state level, review boards or committees are typically multiagency, multidisciplinary, and multijurisdictional. Having a diverse QRB increases the chances that at least one person on the board will have personal knowledge about the training and experiences of a trainee. |

Once a trainee completes a PTB and the final evaluator signs it, the AHJ's QRB typically reviews and evaluates the PTB and all supporting documentation. The QRB may assign a subset of its members to produce a detailed analysis of the submittal, ensuring the completion of all activities before recommending approval or denial to the CO. See Appendix B: Guidance for Qualification Review Boards for a detailed explanation of the QRB structure and processes and Tab 1 to Appendix B: Guidance for Qualification Review Boards for sample QRB documentation templates.

## Documentation Review

The AHJ maintains a complete record of all the evaluations and documentation it needs to validate the certification. The certification record typically includes such items as:

- Completed administrative checklists for progress tracking, position checklists, and/or PTBs,

- Evaluation documents that list:

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[5] AHJs may accomplish this process using another name, such as "recognition/recognized," when use of the term "certification" is inconsistent with AHJ policies or applicable laws.
[6] See 6 U.S.C. § 320.

- Assessment of experiences

- Number of assignments

- Variety of incidents

- Complexity of the incident during which the responder performed,

- Completed Incident Command System (ICS) Form(s) 225 from incident management supervisor(s),

- Information demonstrating the trainee's successful completion of all criteria in all other categories, and

- The QRB's recommendation.

Some AHJs also use historical recognition to qualify individuals outside of the traditional PTB process.

### Historical Recognition

Historical recognition is a process that enables AHJs to recognize an individual's prior qualifications, education, training, and experience as a way of meeting some or all the criteria to qualify for a particular incident-related position. Personnel who have documentation of previous education, training, or significant on-the-job incident experience may receive credit towards qualification for a given position through this process.

The concept of historical recognition does not apply to the physical/medical fitness or currency qualification criteria. Pertinent laws or regulations may also limit an AHJ's use of historical recognition for certificate or licensure requirements.

An AHJ typically applies historical recognition when first implementing a QRB process, when new incident-related positions are added to the AHJ's portfolio, and when a new individual is hired who has served in the same or similar position elsewhere. While each AHJ determines how long to use historical recognition, the most common interval for accepting historical recognition applications for a new QRB process is one year from the date the AHJ implements the process. After this initial period, AHJs may continue to accept historical recognition applications from newly assigned individuals.

### The Historical Recognition Process

An individual seeking historical recognition submits documentation of prior education, training, and/or experience. The QRB assesses the documentation and determines which qualification criteria the candidate has met and which still need to be met. The QRB may invite the applicant to an assessment interview to answer questions about the documentation and prior education, training, and experience.

Based on its assessment, the QRB may find that the individual's prior education, training, and experience:

- Does not enable the individual to meet any of qualification criteria for the position,

- Enables the individual to meet some but not all qualification criteria, or

- Enables the individual to meet all qualification criteria for the position.

When the QRB determines that the individual's prior education, training, and experience meets all criteria for a given position, the QRB recommends that the CO certify the individual as qualified for the position. When the QRB determines that the individual's prior education, training, and experience do not meet all the qualification criteria for the position, the QRB notifies the individual and his/her sponsoring organization of their findings and may make recommendations regarding training and development opportunities. If the unmet criteria involve PTB competencies, the AHJ issues a PTB to the trainee.

### *Training Equivalencies*

The qualification training criteria allow equivalent training based on course objectives for many of the required courses. Awarding equivalency is an AHJ-level responsibility. In determining equivalency of training objectives, the AHJ reviewer should consider course content and objectives and whether the trainee can perform the pertinent tasks as successfully as a trainee who completes the original course. Some training course objectives may be equivalent to two or more separate courses.

## Certification

Once the QRB determines a trainee has successfully completed all requirements for a position, the board forwards a recommendation to the AHJ's CO, explaining its findings and recommending the CO certify the trainee as qualified for the position. If the QRB determines that the trainee's package does not provide enough evidence that the trainee has met the requirements for the position he/she is pursuing, the QRB returns the package to the trainee, along with an indication of any unmet requirements.

Acting on the QRB's positive recommendation, the CO certifies that the individual is qualified for the given position. The AHJ maintains documents regarding the employee's qualification and enters the pertinent information into the AHJ resource/personnel management systems.

## Recertification

Certifications are not permanent. AHJs should establish a process to ensure that personnel continue to be capable of performing in the position(s) for which they are certified. They typically do this through a process of periodically reviewing and, if merited, recertifying personnel. Recertification periods may vary depending on the position. It is ultimately up to the AHJ to establish a recertification timeframe. Each position description includes the proposed recertification period.

To prevent the degradation of the knowledge, capabilities, and competencies required to carry out the responsibilities of a position, a person must perform in that position frequently enough to maintain competency.

Trainees maintain currency by successfully performing in the position in which they are qualified. They can also maintain currency by performing in a higher position(s), provided that their current position is a qualification prerequisite for this higher position. Some AHJs may

allow personnel to meet currency requirements by demonstrating proficiency in exercises. To prevent the degradation of knowledge, experience, training, and capabilities required to successfully carry out the responsibilities of a position, AHJs typically require a person to perform in that position at least once every five years. However, this period may vary based on AHJs' established currency timelines. Currency may also vary based on position requirements. Please see the NIMS Job Titles/Position Qualifications for currency requirements for individual NQS positions.

An individual who does not meet the currency criteria or fails to maintain qualified status reverts to trainee status for that position. The QRB determines if:

- The AHJ should issue a new PTB;

- The individual should complete further training; or

- The individual can gain the requisite experience in an assignment(s).

A return to trainee status may have the advantage of introducing the individual to new technology, procedures, and advances in incident and event management.

## Decertification

AHJs are also responsible for decertification—revoking an individual's position qualifications. An individual may lose his or her qualification for currency reasons, by voluntarily withdrawing, or for other reasons the AHJ deems appropriate. The AHJ should consider initiating a decertification investigation when an individual:

- Takes actions that lead to unsafe conditions on an incident;

- Misrepresents incident qualifications;

- Fails to follow delegation of authority;

- Demonstrates inappropriate conduct or behavior;

- Disregards identified safe practices; or

- Receives one or more "unacceptable" or equivalent performance rating(s).

The AHJ should develop guidelines and rules to revoke or decertify position qualifications. If an investigation determines decertification is warranted, the guidelines should direct immediate removal of decertified personnel from all rosters, lists, or databases of qualified individuals applicable to the specific role or position until recertification occurs. These guidelines should also address the recertification process.

When developing the procedures for decertification and recertification, the AHJ should consider the following:

- Decertification of qualifications only applies to performance in the incident-specific position for which the individual was performing and not for performance of tasks as a part of their regular job.

- During any decertification action, the responder should not accept, the employer should not request, and the AHJ should not approve a responder's deployment.

- ICs do not have the authority to decertify responders; however, an IC may remove (demobilize) a qualified individual from an incident-related position and demobilize the individual. In such cases, the IC should document the reason for early demobilization on the ICS Form 225.

An individual who does not meet the currency criteria or fails to maintain qualified status should be decertified and revert to trainee status for that position.

## Appeals

To address circumstances where an individual feels there is an error in the evaluation of his or her qualifications or receives notice of impending decertification, an AHJ should have a documented appeals process. The AHJ may use the existing QRB to adjudicate the appeal, or the AHJ may appoint an independent review board that may or may not consist of some of the same members of the QRB to make a decision on the appeal. As with other aspects of the NQS guidance, it is beneficial for an AHJ to establish a time limit on the appeal process.

# V.   Credentialing Process

Credentialing is the essential final step in the process for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing personnel for incident-related positions. A common nationwide credentialing approach helps to expedite access to incident sites, acceptance of credentials by other jurisdictions, and ideally, the assurance that personnel deploying to other jurisdictions have the knowledge, experience, training, and capability to perform the duties of their assigned incident-specific roles. Being able to quickly and confidently identify incident management and support personnel from different jurisdictions or organizations who are qualified and authorized to perform incident duties is essential to an efficient integrated incident management operation. Appendix C: Guidelines for the Credentialing of Personnel describes credentialing standards and provides the necessary guidance to assist AHJs in implementing NQS credentialing processes.

While credentialing includes the issuing of identification cards or other credentials, it is separate and distinct from an incident-specific badging process.

## Credentialing, Recertification, and Decertification

AHJs ensure the currency and accuracy of the credentials their employees carry. This is typically an outcome of the recertification/decertification processes. Credentials may expire at the time recertification is required, and the AHJ reissues them following recertification. Credential holders should note the expiration date of their credentials and seek reissuance of the card in case the recertification and credential expiration dates are not the same.

When individuals are decertified, the AHJ promptly retrieves the decertified individual's credentials.

# Glossary

**Access**: The ability to gain entry into a designated area.

**Affiliate Access**: A type of access to a designated area, used by individuals because they accompany an authorized individual or entity. It primarily concerns utility repair crews, individuals volunteering through NGOs, or persons associated with a critical infrastructure (CI) owner or operator.

**Agency**: A government element with a specific function offering a particular kind of assistance.

**Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)**: An entity with the authority and responsibility for the development, implementation, maintenance, and oversight of the qualification process within its organization or jurisdiction. This may be a state or Federal agency, a training commission, or a local agency such as a police or fire department. In some cases, the AHJ may provide support to multiple disciplines that collaborate as a part of a team (e.g., an Incident Management Team).

**Behavior**: An element of PTBs that describes an observable work activity that groups similar tasks necessary to perform the specific activity. See also *Competency* and *Task*.

**Certification**: The process of authoritatively attesting that individuals meet qualifications established for key incident management or support functions and are, therefore, qualified for specific positions.

**Certifying Official (CO)**: An individual authorized by the AHJ to certify the qualifications of incident management and support personnel.

**Coach**: An individual possessing specific job skills and experience who provides instructions and mentoring to help guide a trainee in applicable practices, methods, and skills that can result in task completions in a PTB.

**Competency**: An element of PTBs that describes an observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, or other characteristics that an individual needs to perform the behavior/activity and associated tasks. A competency specifies what skill set the person needs to possess to do the task(s) successfully. See also *Task* and *Behavior*.

**Credentialing**: Providing documentation that identifies personnel and authenticates and verifies their qualification for a particular position.

**Credentialing Authority:** The person or entity that has the authority to credential personnel for a specific jurisdiction or organization. This may or may not be the AHJ (see NIMS).

**Criteria**: A listing within the position qualifications that includes the minimum criteria that a trainee must meet for qualification.

**Critical Infrastructure (CI)**: Assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination of those matters.

**Currency**: Successfully performing in a position for which the individual has qualified within a specified timeframe. To prevent the degradation of knowledge, experience, training, and capabilities required to successfully carry out the responsibilities of a position, a person needs to perform that function or position at least once every five years.

**Decertification**: A process where an individual's qualifications are removed, making him/her ineligible for deployment in that position. This can occur due to lapse of currency or other issue(s) detrimental to performance.

**Designee**: A separate organization, agency, or approval body that, by regulation, instruction, or other issuance, has specific authority to make any determination, give or revoke any approval, or take any other action required or permitted with respect to managing, maintaining, or operating its delegated qualifications processes.

**Direct Entry**: A process that allows personnel to be qualified for certain supervisory positions without previously obtaining subordinate position qualifications.

**Emergency**: Any incident, whether natural, technological, or human-caused, that necessitates responsive action to protect life or property.

**Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)**: A congressionally ratified agreement that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. Through EMAC, a disaster-affected state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues up front: liability and reimbursement.

**Emergency Operations Center (EOC)**: The physical location where the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility or located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction.

**Emergency Response Providers**: Local, state, and Federal governmental and nongovernmental emergency public safety, fire, law enforcement, emergency response, emergency medical (including hospital emergency facilities), and related personnel, agencies, and authorities.

**Equivalency**: Alternate education, training, or experience that meets the requirements for specific position qualification criteria as determined by the AHJ.

**Evaluator**: An individual authorized by the AHJ to observe, document and complete evaluation records on a trainee as contained in PTBs. An evaluator can be a trainee's supervisor and does not have to be qualified in the same position as the one under consideration.

**Federal Emergency Response Official (FERO)**: A Federal government employee or contractor who is likely to deploy in accordance with assignments in the National Response Framework.

**Final Evaluator**: The individual who evaluates the trainee during his or her final position performance assignment. A final evaluator is generally qualified in the same position under consideration. The final evaluator completes the final evaluator's verification section in the PTB.

**Historical Recognition**: Recognition of an individual's past experience or qualifications as equivalent to the current criteria found in the position qualification criteria for a position.

**Identification**: The verification and documentation of an individual's identity to ensure an appropriate level of trust in the individual's identity.

**Incident**: Per NIMS, an occurrence, natural or manmade, that necessitates a response to protect life or property. In this document, the word "incident" includes planned events as well as emergencies and/or disasters of all kinds and sizes.

**Incident Commander (IC)**: The individual responsible for all incident activities, including developing strategies and tactics and ordering and releasing resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident activities.

**Incident Complexity**: Incident criteria determined by the level of difficulty, severity, or overall resistance faced by incident management or support personnel while trying to manage or support an incident to a successful conclusion or to manage one type of incident or event compared to another type.

**Incident Qualification System (IQS)/Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS)**: IQS is a system of defined response and support staff positions used in emergency and incident response, most often within the Federal interagency dispatch system for qualifying state/local resources within the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS). Federal interagency resources use a similar system known as IQCS. IQCS is a management tool to record, track, and report on responder qualifications for the agencies that form the National Wildfire Coordinating Group and the Department of Interior.

**Mission-Ready Package (MRP)**: Everything required to conduct a mutual aid mission. MRPs include components such as pre-scripted mission statement, limitations, required support from other sources, readiness, personnel costs, equipment costs, travel costs, and other costs.

**Mutual Aid Agreement**: A written or oral agreement between and among agencies/organizations and/or jurisdictions that provides a mechanism to quickly obtain assistance in the form of personnel, equipment, materials, and other associated services. The primary objective is to facilitate the rapid, short-term deployment of support prior to, during, and/or after an incident.

**National Incident Management System (NIMS)**: A systematic, proactive approach to guide all levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the effects of incidents. NIMS provides stakeholders across the whole community with the shared vocabulary, systems, and processes to successfully deliver the capabilities described in the National Preparedness System. NIMS provides a consistent foundation for dealing with all incidents, ranging from daily occurrences to incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response.

**National Qualification System (NQS)**: A nationwide approach and best practices for AHJs to use in qualifying, certifying, and credentialing incident management and support personnel.

**Nongovernmental Organization (NGO)**: An entity with an association that is based on the interests of its members, individuals, or institutions. An NGO is not created by a government, but it may work cooperatively with government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based groups, relief agencies, organizations that

support people with access and functional needs, and animal welfare organizations. NGOs provide relief services to sustain life, reduce physical and emotional distress, and promote the recovery of disaster survivors.

**Portability**: The capacity to transfer qualifications of an individual from one AHJ to another.

**Position Endorsements**: Documentation validating specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that an AHJ establishes beyond the minimum qualifications for a given position.

**Position Qualifications**: The minimum criteria necessary for individuals to fill a specific position.

**Position Task Book (PTB)**: A document that describes the minimum competencies, behaviors, and tasks to qualify or recertify for a position and documents a trainee's performance of given tasks.

**Private Sector**: Organizations and individuals that are not part of any governmental structure. The private sector includes for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, formal and informal structures, commerce, and industry.

**Qualification**: The process of enabling personnel to perform the duties of specific positions and documenting their demonstration of the capabilities and competencies that those positions require.

**Qualification Review Board (QRB)**: A panel representing the AHJ who evaluates the trainee's ability to fulfill an incident-related position. The QRB evaluation results in a recommendation to the CO to certify or not certify the trainee as qualified for a certain position.

**Qualifications Templates**: Tables located in the position qualifications containing the specific criteria for each position. These templates are the reference guide for determining what proficiencies, education, training, experience, physical/medical fitness, currency, and professional and technical licenses and certifications an AHJ requires for an individual to achieve qualification.

**Qualifying Exercise**: An exercise identified by the AHJ as an acceptable means for evaluating certain PTB tasks.

**Qualifying Incident/Event**: An incident or event that the AHJ determines meets complexity, duration, and relevance criteria of a position such that it would provide sufficient opportunity for an individual who is filling that position to exercise the position's roles and responsibilities.

**Recertification**: A process where the AHJ determines what training, tasks, or experience an individual must perform to requalify for a specific incident-related position.

**Reconsideration**: The process through which an employee requests the reversal or modification of a decision made by the CO.

**Resource Management**: Systems for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely, efficient, and unimpeded access to resources needed to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an incident.

**Resources**: Personnel, equipment, teams, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment to incident operations and for which status is maintained. Resources are described by kind and type and may be used in operational support or supervisory capacities at an incident or at an EOC.

**Revocation**: The cancellation of certification and withdrawal of identification documents from personnel who are no longer certified.

**Task**: An element of PTBs that describes a specific demonstrable action needed to successfully perform in a position. Trainees must demonstrate completion of required tasks. See also *Competency* and *Behavior*.

**Task Codes**: Codes within PTBs that depict the circumstances in which the trainee can demonstrate proficiency on specific tasks.

**Trainee**: An individual, sponsored by his or her agency and holding an initiated PTB, who is seeking to qualify for an incident-related position.

**Type**: A NIMS resource classification that refers to the capability of a specific kind of resource, numerically classified according to established metrics.

**Unaffiliated Volunteer:** Also known as spontaneous or emergent volunteers, individuals who offer to help or self-deploy to assist in emergency situations without fully coordinating their activities. They are considered "unaffiliated" in that they are not part of a disaster relief organization.

**Volunteer**: An individual accepted to perform services by the lead agency (which has authority to accept volunteer services) when the individual performs services without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for services performed.

## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AHJ | Authority Having Jurisdiction |
| CBRN | Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear |
| CDP | Center for Domestic Preparedness |
| CI | Critical Infrastructure |
| CO | Certifying Official |
| EMAC | Emergency Management Assistance Compact |
| EMI | Emergency Management Institute |
| EMS | Emergency Medical Services |
| EMT | Emergency Medical Technician |
| EOC | Emergency Operations Center |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| FERO | Federal Emergency Response Official |
| FIPS | Federal Information Processing Standard |
| HazMat | Hazardous Material |
| HSEEP | Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program |
| HSPD | Homeland Security Presidential Directive |
| IAP | Incident Action Plan |
| IC | Incident Commander |
| ICS | Incident Command System |
| IQCS | Incident Qualification and Certification System |
| IQS | Incident Qualification System |
| MRP | Mission-Ready Package |
| NGO | Nongovernmental Organization |
| NHTSA | National Highway Traffic Safety Administration |
| NIC | National Integration Center |
| NIMS | National Incident Management System |
| NQS | National Qualification System |

| NRF | National Response Framework |
|-----|------------------------------|
| NTES | National Training and Education System |
| NWCG | National Wildfire Coordinating Group |
| PIV | Personal Identity Verification |
| POC | Point of Contact |
| POST | Peace Officers Standards and Training |
| PPE | Personal Protective Equipment |
| PTB | Position Task Book |
| QRB | Qualifications Review Board |
| RFID | Radio-Frequency Identification |
| ROSS | Resource Ordering and Status System |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| RTLT | Resource Typing Library Tool |
| WMD | Weapons of Mass Destruction |

# Resources

The following resources can assist AHJs in establishing qualification, certification, and credentialing processes consistent with NQS doctrine.

## FEMA Resource Typing Library Tool (RTLT)

- The RTLT is an online catalog of national resource typing definitions, NIMS Job Titles and corresponding Position Qualifications, and PTBs.

- http://www.fema.gov/resource-management-mutual-aid

## Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP)

- The HSEEP provides a set of guiding principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. HSEEP exercise and evaluation doctrine is flexible, adaptable, available to stakeholders across the whole community, and applicable for exercises across all mission areas – Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.

- https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/32326

## Incident Command System (ICS) Resource Center

- The ICS Resource Center maintained by the Emergency Management Center (EMI) provides information and links to an extensive array of ICS training materials, job aids, position checklists, and forms.

- https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/index.htm

## National Incident Management System (NIMS)

- The NIMS document includes comprehensive guidance regarding incident resource management, including the preparation and typing of resources including personnel.

- The Resource Management section of NIMS contains specific information regarding the qualification, certification, and credentialing of incident management and support personnel. It also defines the use of pertinent terms to ensure common terminology among all qualification system users.

- https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system

## National Training and Education System (NTES)

- The NTES provides an organized approach to training for emergency managers and emergency response providers across the Nation. The Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) and EMI are two of its training organizations.

  – *CDP:* As the only congressionally chartered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training center for civilians, the CDP provides specialized, all-hazards preparedness training, particularly related to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive WMD. FEMA fully funds CDP training for local, state, and tribal responders.

- https://cdp.dhs.gov/

- *EMI*: FEMA's emergency management training arm, EMI is the national focal point for the development and delivery of emergency management training. EMI provides an extensive list of training activities to help personnel qualify for ICS positions.

- https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx

## National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) System Guide, PMS 310-1

- This comprehensive document describes the minimum requirements for training, experience, physical fitness, and currency standards for personnel in wildland fire positions. It also documents the system that NWCG member organizations use to qualify personnel for these positions.

- https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms310-1.pdf

## NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid

- The NIMS Guideline for Mutual Aid provides guidance based on common practices of mutual aid agreements, compacts, and plans for use prior to and following an incident or planned event. Private and nonprofit sectors, faith-based organizations, and governments can use this guidance as a tool and resource in developing or refining mutual aid agreements or plans.

- http://www.fema.gov/resource-management-mutual-aid

## NIMS ICS All-Hazards Position-Specific Training Program Website

- Maintained by NTES, the site provides information regarding training for personnel responsible for managing incidents. This training addressed on the website enables participants to perform the responsibilities for specific ICS positions.

- https://training.fema.gov/allhazards/

## NIMS Webpage

- At the NIMS webpage, users can find links to the NIMS documents, such as this Guideline, as well as information regarding training, implementation guidance, the latest updates, and contact information for FEMA's regional NIMS coordinators.

- https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system

## References

- Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 201 – Personal Identity Verification (PIV) of Federal Employees and Contractors (FIPS PUB 201-2), August 2013. http://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/FIPS/NIST.FIPS.201-2.pdf

- Homeland Security Act of 2002, Section 510, as amended (6 U.S.C. §320). https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2007-title6/pdf/USCODE-2007-title6-chap1-subchapV-sec320.pdf

- Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5), Management of Domestic Incidents, February 28, 2003. https://www.dhs.gov/publication/homeland-security-presidential-directive-5

- HSPD-12, Policies for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors, August 27, 2004. https://www.dhs.gov/homeland-security-presidential-directive-12

- National Response Framework, 2016. https://www.fema.gov/national-planning-frameworks

- Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers, Approved by the Federal CIO Council May 6, 2009. https://cio.gov/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/PIV_Interoperabillity_Non-Federal_Issuers_May-2009.pdf

- U.S.C. Title 6 – Domestic Security, Chapter 1 – Homeland Security Organization, Subchapter V – National Emergency Management, Section 320 – Credentialing and Typing, January 7, 2011. http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title6-section320&num=0&edition=prelim

# Appendix A: Position Task Book (PTB) Guidelines

## Design and Use

PTBs are performance evaluation tools that provide a standardized method to document the successful performance of the specific tasks a trainee is required to perform to qualify for a particular incident-specific position. The performance criteria for each position include competencies, behaviors, and tasks. Once the trainee demonstrates proficiency in all the position tasks, an evaluator documents the results and recommends that the CO or CO's designee certify the trainee as qualified in that position.

The PTBs document the trainee's successful performance of the identified tasks and include areas for evaluator comments and notes regarding the evaluated experience. A PTB does not replace the use of an Incident Personnel Performance Rating (ICS Form 225), which a supervisor should complete and submit after each incident or event assignment to document a trainee's performance.

Users can download the NIMS PTBs via the RTLT.[7] In addition, the RTLT contains a PTB Users Guide to help AHJs, evaluators, and trainers understand and complete the template.

The AHJ should develop a system to monitor and track the issuance and completion of PTBs and determine who has the authority to issue them.

## Completion Timeframe Guidelines

After issuing a PTB, the AHJ should require trainees to complete the PTB within five years of completing the first task. However, many positions are typically completed in significantly less time. AHJs impose less or more stringent timelines based on the availability of opportunities for trainees to perform the PTB tasks and demonstrate proficiency under appropriate conditions (actual deployments and exercises, if permitted). AHJs should have a process that allows the extension of the deadline for completion of a PTB beyond five years and that considers the impact this has on currency of the trainee's tasks and previously completed training.

If the trainee does not complete the PTB within the established timeframe, the PTB expires and is no longer valid. The AHJ may issue the trainee a new PTB. Prior to a trainee initiating a new PTB, he or she should complete any new criteria in the current position qualification criteria for the position that he or she has not already completed.

At the AHJ's discretion, the evaluator may take into account prior experience documented in the expired PTB in completion of the new PTB.

If the qualification criteria for a position change while a trainee is in the midst of completing a PTB, individuals can continue to use the previous criteria as long as he or she completes the process prior to the PTB's expiration deadline. If the AHJ alters the position qualification criteria, personnel qualified in that position prior to the revision may retain certification at their

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[7] PTBs will be uploaded to the NIMS Resource Management and Mutual Aid webpage when they are finalized (https://www.fema.gov/resource-management-mutual-aid).

AHJ's discretion. To qualify in any other position, the individual should meet the criteria identified in the latest editions of those documents.

## The PTB Process

A trainee is typically involved in three types of activities during the PTB process: training, coaching, and evaluation. When a trainee needs to learn a new knowledge, skill, or ability, the AHJ often pairs him or her with a coach (an individual who is well qualified in the position or task). The coach instructs and trains the trainee to meet the performance qualification criteria for the position. When the trainee is ready, an evaluator observes and assesses the trainee's performance. The coach and the evaluator have different functions, but often are the same individual. The AHJ should ensure the evaluation process is free from bias and does not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.

A trainee cannot work on multiple PTBs for a specific position at the same time (e.g., a trainee cannot work on both a Type 1 IC PTB and a Type 2 IC PTB at the same time). If a particular position has multiple types, in most cases an individual must qualify at the lowest type before pursuing the next higher type. For example, before seeking qualification for a Type 1 position, an individual must first qualify at the Type 3 level, then at the Type 2 level.[8]

Individuals complete PTBs for each new position. The AHJ determines how many positions an individual can be qualified for at any one time. That means an individual cannot use the same PTB he or she completed for qualification at one level (e.g., for a Type 3 position) for the next higher level (e.g., a Type 2 position).

### *Training*

During training, the trainee's role is to watch and observe the coach performing the tasks associated with the position: what he or she does and in what order, why he or she does it, and how he or she does it. The coach and trainee discuss what occurred and why the coach performed particular actions. The number of times the trainee observes the coach depends on the complexity, risk, and trainee's experience with the task.

### *Coaching*

During this activity, the trainee practices the skill or task under the mentorship and observation of a coach. Coaching consists of the coach observing the trainee performing the same tasks, assessing the trainee's performance, and providing feedback. It also provides the coach with an opportunity to correct any problems and ensure the task is performed safely.

### *Evaluation*

When the trainee is ready to perform the task(s) to be assessed, the trainee asks an evaluator to assess his or her competency. The evaluator observes, evaluates, and records performance. Only when the trainee is performing a task that may endanger the trainee or others does the evaluator typically step in to offer corrective guidance.

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[8] Refer to NIMS for information on resource typing. (https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system).

The final evaluator reviews the entire PTB, ensures that all tasks have been completed and verified, and completes the final verification portion of the PTB. The final evaluator is generally qualified in the same position as the trainee.

# Appendix B: Guidance for Qualification Review Boards (QRB)

## Overview

The QRB is a vital element to review, vet, and certify individuals for incident management or support positions. A QRB reviews the training, skills, knowledge, experience, currency, and medical and physical fitness guidelines that individuals must achieve and maintain for position qualifications. QRBs may use PTBs, evaluations, and NIMS Job Titles and corresponding Position Qualifications available on the RTLT to help guide their decisions to qualify personnel.

This appendix describes the recommended composition of a QRB or committee and its general roles and responsibilities. It also provides tools and templates to assist the QRB in executing its role.

## Description and Establishment of QRBs

A QRB is a panel representing the AHJ. It serves two primary functions:

1.  Establishes or maintains the qualification criteria for positions; and
2.  Makes certification recommendations to the CO based on a review of completed PTBs, training records, and other documentation submitted by trainees.

### Board Membership and Organization

QRB membership should involve a cross-section of relevant agencies, organizations, individuals, and disciplines. This reduces the potential for favoritism and unequal treatment of individuals during the qualification process.

The QRB should establish a governance structure. This usually includes a chair and vice chair either elected by the membership or appointed by the AHJ. The governance structure typically includes terms of office and board/committee procedures, as well as meeting frequency and a decisions appeals process.

### QRB Duties and Responsibilities

The AHJ authorizes the QRB to review and determine whether an individual meets the requirements for qualification. Applying their collective expertise, the QRB reviews the evidence submitted by the trainee to decide if the individual has met the criteria established to serve in a certain position. Such evidence typically includes completed PTBs, course records, certificates, resumes, experience documentation, and performance ratings. The QRB notifies the trainee via email or letter of its decision.

The QRB also establishes processes and internal controls that subject each application to a standard level of review. For example, it sets evaluation guidelines, including how many incidents, events, or exercises qualify toward the experience required; how the quality of the experience is measured; and the evaluation timeframe. Under the direction of the AHJ, the QRB determines:

*   The minimum number and duration of deployments or activations, along with the nature of incidents or exercises, for which a trainee needs to be evaluated in order to be qualified;

- The guidelines for determining the quality of the experience gained through an evaluation process;

- Whether the trainee's records meet all of the requirements for the position;

- Whether the evaluations of the trainee are satisfactory (i.e., whether all competencies and behaviors have been adequately demonstrated for a specific position);

- Whether the PTB is complete; and

- Upon completion of the review, the recommendation for the trainee (approval, denial, or finding submitted work to be incomplete).

The QRB documents the process and findings for any review or audit it performs. If the QRB recommends approval, it submits the trainee's package to the CO for certification.

# Tab 1 to Appendix B: Sample Qualification Review Board Templates

QRBs may use the templates in the following sections. QRBs may tailor the forms and letters to meet the needs of their organization or jurisdiction.

## National Incident Management System (NIMS) Position Qualification Application Template

[Insert Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Name]

[Insert AHJ mailing address]

[Insert AHJ phone number]

[Insert AHJ point of contact (POC) and title]

[Insert AHJ POC phone number]

[Insert AHJ POC e-mail address]

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❑ QRB ASSIGNMENT          ❑ Operations/Coordination Center/Emergency Operations Center

❑ Incident Management Team          ❑ OTHER

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The QRB members review applications [TIMEFRAME]. Applications are due to the QRB by [DATE] of the month prior to the next scheduled meeting. Please submit only completed applications to avoid any unnecessary delays. Submit applications to either the mailing address or email address above.

**Trainee Name:**

**First:** Click here to enter text.  **Last:** Click here to enter text.  **M.I.:** Click here to enter text.

**Current Agency Position or Title:** Click here to enter text.

**Trainee Agency:** Click here to enter text.

**Agency Mailing Address:** Click here to enter text.

**City:** Click here to enter text. **State:** Click here to enter text. **Zip:** Click here to enter text.

**Phone:** Click here to enter text. **Email:** Click here to enter text.

**Position for Consideration:** Click here to enter text.

### Please submit your completed Position Task Book with this application

### PTB Checklist

1. Personal Data

    ❑ "PTB Assigned To" completed

    ❑ "PTB Initiated By" completed

    ❑ "Location and Date PTB was Initiated" completed

2. Evaluation Data

    ❏ All tasks signed off

    ❏ Evaluation Record completed (back of PTB)

    ❏ "Final Evaluator's Verification" signed

3. Training Certificates/Equivalencies

    ❏ All training certificates present

    ❏ Relevant equivalencies approved

4. Relevant experience

    ❏ Relevant job experience and time included in position or narratives

    ❏ Historical recognition documented as necessary

    ❏ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) documented as necessary

5. Additional Documentation

    ❏ Incident Experience Narrative, Performance Rating (s) (ICS Form 225), Activity Log (ICS Form 214) included

    ❏ Incident Action Plans list name, position and incident

    ❏ Other documents included [please list below]

## Self-Assessment and Evaluation Form Template

**[Insert agency logo here]**

### POSITION SELF-ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION FORM

[Insert Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Name]

[Insert AHJ mailing address]

[Insert AHJ phone number]

[Insert AHJ point of contact (POC) and title]

[Insert AHJ POC phone number]

[Insert AHJ POC e-mail address]

---

❏ QRB ASSIGNMENT          ❏ Operations/Coordination Center/Emergency Operations Center

❏ Incident Management Team          ❏ OTHER

---

The QRB members review applications [TIMEFRAME]. Applications are due to the QRB by [DATE] of the month prior to the next scheduled meeting. Please submit only completed applications to avoid any unnecessary delays. Submit applications to the mailing address or email address above.

**Trainee Name:**

**First:** Click here to enter text.  **Last:** Click here to enter text.  **M.I.:** Click here to enter text.

**Current Agency Position or Title:** Click here to enter text.

**Trainee Agency:** Click here to enter text.

**Agency Mailing Address:** Click here to enter text.

**City:** Click here to enter text. **State:** Click here to enter text. **Zip:** Click here to enter text.

**Phone:** Click here to enter text. **Email:** Click here to enter text.

**Job Title for Consideration:** Click here to enter text.

**Professional Experience**

Please list significant experience related to the position you are applying for that directly supports your application.

Click here to enter text.

**Significant Incident or Planned Event (Type 3 or Above) Experience**

Please attach Incident Action Plans, Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201), Performance Rating (ICS Form 225), etc., for any incidents or planned events that support your application.

Click here to enter text.

**Education, Training, Professional Certification, and Licensure**

Please list related degrees, training courses, professional certificates, licenses, etc., that support your application and include pertinent documents.

Click here to enter text.

**Other Supporting Documentation**

Please attach any other documents relevant to your application that further support and record your experiences.

Click here to enter text.

## Sample Decertification Letter

When an individual's certification expires or requires revocation, the AHJ should formally notify the individual and document the situation. AHJs or QRBs typically send formal letters to the individual.

The following items are standard elements of loss of qualification or decertification notification correspondence.

**Date**: The date of the correspondence serves as the starting date for the window for any corrective action.

**Personal Information**: Include the individual's name and address and the job title for the decertified position in the salutation and subject line of the document.

**Position Currency Requirements** (if the individual is losing a qualification due to failure to remain current in the position): Summarize the currency requirements for the specific position for which the individual is certified.

**Reason for Decertification**: Explain the rationale for decertification (e.g., did not supply documentation for currency within allotted timeframe, a conduct issue). Also, explain what suspension or revocation of certification means for the individual (e.g., the individual is no longer approved to respond to any incidents or events outside of his or her home jurisdiction or while supporting normal mutual aid duties).

**Summary of Actions**: Describe the steps, if applicable, that the individual can take to requalify or recertify, along with the timeframe for the actions (e.g., provide missing documentation within a certain timeframe). Indicate what will occur if the individual does not address the outstanding issues within the specified timeframe. This may include any or all of the below actions:

- The individual's name will be removed from the AHJ's resource mobilization list for this specific position;

- The individual reverts back to trainee status with specific requirements for how to requalify for this position within a certain period;

- The individual's credential(s) will be rescinded; and/or

- An individual initiates a new PTB with all supporting prerequisites if he or she does not requalify within the allotted timeframe.

**Point of Contact**: Provide the name and contact information of a person whom the individual may contact with any questions.

## Decertification/Removal of Qualification Appeal Template

[Insert Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) Agency]

[Insert AHJ mailing address]

[Insert AHJ phone number]

[Insert AHJ point of contact (POC) and title]

[Insert AHJ POC phone number]

[Insert AHJ POC e-mail address]

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❑ QRB ASSIGNMENT          ❑ Operations/Coordination Center/Emergency Operations Center

❑ Incident Management Team          ❑ OTHER

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The QRB member review applications [TIMEFRAME]. Applications are due to the QRB by [DATE] of the month prior to the next scheduled meeting. Please submit only completed applications to avoid any unnecessary delays. Submit applications to the mailing address or the POC email address above.

**Trainee Name:**

**First:** Click here to enter text.  **Last:** Click here to enter text.  **M.I.:** Click here to enter text.

**Current Agency Position or Title:** Click here to enter text.

**Trainee Agency:** Click here to enter text.

**Agency Mailing Address:** Click here to enter text.

**City:** Click here to enter text. **State:** Click here to enter text. **Zip:** Click here to enter text.

**Phone:** Click here to enter text. **Email:** Click here to enter text.

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**Position for Consideration:** Click here to enter text.

# Appendix C: Guidelines for the Credentialing of Personnel

## Overview

Credentialing means providing documentation, typically badges or identification cards, which verify an individual's identity and qualifications to fulfill an incident-related position. The credentials may also document other attributes of individuals, such as affiliations and/or privileges. These guidelines address national credentialing standards to validate the identity of individuals who have been qualified and certified to fill incident-related positions. The issuance of credentials does automatically grant access to an incident site. In addition to proper credentials, incident management and support personnel must be formally authorized to deploy.

## Purpose

This appendix fosters interoperability among incident management and support personnel from all levels of government, NGOs, and the private sector by:

- Providing guidance on national credentialing standards;

- Presenting operational definitions and important terms related to credentialing;

- Suggesting ways to adapt the national credentialing standards to departmental, agency, jurisdictional, or organizational requirements; and

- Describing how to obtain additional guidance and technical assistance on credentialing.

## Applicability

These guidelines are intended for all agencies and organizations with incident management and support personnel, particularly those who may deploy personnel to other jurisdictions. The FEMA Administrator develops standards and guidance for credentialing incident management and support personnel nationwide.

Federal agencies are required by law to credential "incident management personnel, emergency response providers, and other personnel (including temporary personnel) who are likely to be needed to respond to a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other manmade disaster."[9] Additionally, since these agencies are also required to adopt NIMS, they must credential their personnel according to NIMS guidelines.[10]

While local, state,[11] and tribal governments, NGOs, and private sector organizations, as well as the Federal legislative and judicial branches, are not legally required to credential their incident management and support personnel, they are encouraged to follow these guidelines to improve interoperability and facilitate mutual aid.

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[9] See 6 U.S.C. §320 – Credentialing and Typing.

[10] Per HSPD-5, Management of Domestic Incidents, 2003.

[11] In this document, "state" refers to the 56 states, territories, and insular areas (which includes any state of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands).

The NQS Guideline and this appendix supersede the NIMS Guideline for Credentialing Personnel issued in 2011.

## National Identification Standardization

Identification standards involve verifying an individual's identity and incident qualifications, issuing uniform identification cards, and revoking the cards when appropriate. A consistent approach to these functions assists in establishing interoperability in identification and access control systems by:

- Establishing common terminology for identification;

- Defining the consistent technical requirements for identity cards and badges; and

- Supporting the requisite level of trust in the identity of the holder and other attributes and privileges, where applicable.

### *Identity and Qualification Verification*

Before issuing a credential, the credentialing authority must have an appropriate level of trust in the identity of the proposed person. Identification verification processes vary by organization, but the general process includes the following steps to credential an individual:

- The individual's organization (e.g., governmental agency, private sector company, or NGO) submits an application to their appropriate credentialing agency with proof of identity and certification that the individual is qualified for a given position or positions.[12]

- The credentialing agency verifies the individual's identity and his/her certification as qualified for the position described in the requested credential(s).

Following verification of the individual's identity and qualifications, the credentialing agency takes the following actions:

- Notifies the submitting entity of the approval;

- Issues a credential (identification card or badge); and

- Uploads the information to the appropriate credentialing information database.

### *Issuance of Identification Cards*

The Federal Information Processing Standards Publication 201-2, Personal Identity Verification of Federal Employees and Contractors (FIPS 201), specifies the architecture and technical requirements for a common identification standard for Federal employees and contractors.[13]

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[12] Each state, jurisdiction, agency, or organization designates credentialing agencies based on the legal authority governing that entity. For government organizations, the authority to credential usually originates from an elected official or agency head. In the case of the private sector and NGOs, authority usually originates from the senior executive of that organization or the governing board.

[13] See FIPS 201 (http://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/FIPS/NIST.FIPS.201-2.pdf).

It meets the requirements contained in HSPD-12, Policies for a Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors.

As noted above, Federal departments and agencies are required to identify and credential incident management personnel. Federal departments and agencies designate these personnel as Federal Emergency Response Officials (FERO) and mark their FIPS 201 credentials accordingly. Federal departments and agencies also credential non-Federal personnel who work in Federal offices in accordance with FIPS 201.[14]

While providing credentials that comply with FIPS 201-type requirements may be impractical for some non-Federal organizations, FEMA encourages jurisdictions and organizations to issue permanent identity cards that support secure, electronic, real-time identity verification and authentication to personnel who have incident roles, to the extent possible.

### *Revocation*

Only personnel who maintain employment with an organization and whose qualifications are current should possess credentials. Therefore, to ensure the integrity of credentials, agencies or organizations that issue credentials should establish a process for revoking them expeditiously when necessary.

When an individual's employment or affiliation with an organization is terminated, or an individual is no longer appropriately qualified, or certified, the credentialing entity should promptly rescind incident-related credentials, as well as any other organizational identification or affiliation access cards. In addition, updates to information technology systems should reflect the change in employment, qualification, or affiliation.

FIPS 201 requires a credentialing entity to revoke an individual's credentials within 18 hours of being notified of that individual's termination of employment; loss of qualification, certification, or affiliation; or lost, stolen, or compromised card. In certain cases, 18 hours is an unacceptable delay. In those instances, the credentialing agency should execute procedures to disseminate the information and revoke the credentials as rapidly as possible.

## Using Credentials in Incidents

Credentials are essential during incidents because they validate the identity of incident management and support personnel and the incident-related positions they are qualified to fill. Having this information allows officials at the incident or in associated operations/coordination centers to assign personnel quickly to the appropriate position with confidence that the individual can perform as expected.

The following section describes how to use credentials to control access to incident sites and other incident facilities.

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[14] The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-295) requires maintaining a Federal Response Capability Inventory. As such, Federal departments and agencies must submit an electronic inventory of all FERO-designated personnel to FEMA on an annual basis. This list includes the FEROs' assignments when activated.

## *Authorization and Access*

While a credential is useful for verifying identity and qualifications, a credential is not an authority to deploy to an incident. The authorization for deployment can come from many sources such as the IC, a government emergency operation center, a mission assignment for Federal Government personnel, or from owners and operators of critical infrastructure (CI).

Authorization for deployment must be deliberate and specific. Deployment authorization documentation may consist of orders, EMAC mission-orders, or travel authorizations citing a specific purpose. Persons who deploy without proper authorization should expect to be turned away from the incident site. Public safety personnel tasked with controlling access to incident areas will allow access only to persons with both appropriate credentials and proper authorization to deploy.

| **Unrequested Resources** |
| --- |
| During incidents, unrequested responders sometimes arrive at an incident area. Such personnel converging on a site interfere with incident management and place an extra logistical and management burden on an already stressed system by: |
| ▪ Creating additional supervisory, logistical, and safety needs |
| ▪ Depleting the resources needed to provide continued services to their home community; |
| ▪ Complicating resource tracking and accountability; and/or |
| ▪ Limiting the access of formally requested resources. |
| Responders should wait for an official deployment notification, rather than spontaneously self-deploying to an incident, and be prepared to show proof of authorization to deploy |

## *Verification*

In designing a credentialing system and forms of identification, authorities should consider how to verify credentials at the incident scene. In some cases, handheld and stationary devices are available that can electronically read PIV credentials. These on-scene devices can link to the source of credentialing to verify, manage, and update attributes associated with the credential holder. If an electronic device is not available, the requesting jurisdiction or facility manager should establish an alternate verification process.

## Special Application of the Guideline for Local, State, Tribal, Private Sector, and Nongovernmental Organizational Personnel

This section provides specific recommendations to local, state, and tribal authorities in adopting policies for credentialing incident management and support personnel. This section also presents model credentialing standards for NGOs and private sector entities. While these groups are not required to comply with these standards, implementation and compliance helps to ensure consistency with other organizations and their credentialing activities.

Local, state, and tribal authorities frequently provide assistance to, or receive assistance from, neighboring jurisdictions under mutual aid and assistance arrangements. Therefore, mutually understood and accepted credentialing protocols are essential across jurisdictional boundaries. In addition, Federal personnel may deploy to support local, state, and tribal response and recovery efforts. Interoperability, including standardized credential recognition, between local, state, and

tribal and Federal incident management authorities is vital. Using guidance in Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers[15] and issuing credentials at the local, state, and tribal levels that reflect PIV-type card standards facilitates this interoperability.

Both NGOs and private sector organizations support governmental incident management efforts. NGOs, such as faith-based groups, relief agencies, organizations that support people with access and functional needs, and animal welfare organizations, often provide services that complement governmental incident management efforts. Private sector organizations, including CI owners and operators, businesses, academia, industry, and trade associations, are often the primary providers of critical services to the public and possess special knowledge and resources that are essential to incident support. Since NGOs and private sector organizations are responsible for providing the necessary documentation and credentials to the personnel they deploy, their use of Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers guidance in their credentialing systems enables timely and close cooperation and collaboration with government partners.

### *Credentialing Personnel Who Are Not Certified for Incident-Related Positions*

In many cases, jurisdictions and organizations issue credentials to employees and accredited volunteers who assist with incident management operations but who do not possess a certification for an incident-related position (e.g., power restoration crews or volunteers in a shelter). Such credentials typically identify the individuals and authenticate their affiliation with a particular agency or organization.

### *Affiliation Access*

In responding to incidents or threats, private sector organizations and NGOs often rely on external resources to augment their capabilities. Providing access to such external resources ("affiliates") can be complicated, especially during disasters or emergencies. Affiliation access enables governmental authorities or organizations to devise procedures and systems that expedite access to incident sites and facilities to external resources such as individuals volunteering through NGOs or persons associated with a CI owner or operator (e.g., utility repair crews).

An affiliation-based access process provides control for officials while enabling NGOs and private sector entities to designate personnel, employees, contractors, and equipment authorized to enter an incident area. Affiliation access processes should:

- Identify the authorities who can grant priority access to personnel, crews, and equipment needed to support incident response and recovery efforts, including CI damage assessment and restoration;

- Provide government personnel with awareness of NGO or private sector affiliates who may be working in the incident area;

- Communicate and recognize access decisions at all levels of access control;

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[15] Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers, Federal CIO Council, May 6, 2009. https://cio.gov/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/PIV_Interoperabillity_Non-Federal_Issuers_May-2009.pdf

- Enable processes that support advance identification and authorization of nongovernmental personnel, when practical; and

- Establish procedures to expedite access in coordination with public safety officials for affiliated personnel who are not pre-credentialed.

In some cases, local, state, and tribal governments may issue credentials for NGO and private sector incident management and support personnel.

## *Access Control and Affiliation Documentation*

For each incident, a designated official(s) controls access to facilities and services within an incident area. This may be an IC, a private sector owner or operator, or an operations center director, among others. NGOs and private sector organizations must provide necessary documentation and credentials to their incident management and support personnel and coordinate with the appropriate government authorities regarding the personnel and resources they are deploying.

Jurisdictions have different statutes and regulations, such as Good Samaritan laws, that may affect credentialing procedures for NGOs and private sector organizations. NGOs and private sector partners should seek the assistance of the respective local, state, and tribal governments that they support to integrate with the governmental credentialing processes and standards. Credentialing personnel ahead of time increases efficiency when incidents occur.

Adopting practices that work in concert with credentialing, as defined in this Guideline, integrates an organization's incident management and support personnel into the established incident command processes and facilitates their response. Jurisdictions, NGOs, and private sector organizations should:

- Assist their personnel in obtaining and maintaining credentials that conform to this Guideline;

- Ensure individuals have proper identification (e.g., a driver's license, passport, or another form of government identification), in addition to a credential;

- Establish processes for providing authorizations and documentation for their incident management and support personnel for easy validation and acceptance by receiving jurisdictions;

- Maintain a roster of credentialed personnel to match the requests for mutual aid;

- Develop and maintain processes to assist government officials at receiving/security controls and check-in points to validate/verify identities, authorizations, and credentials; and

- Provide information to and training for their volunteers and employees about credentialing.

## *Credentialing Unaffiliated Volunteers*

Spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers—neighbors and ordinary citizens—often arrive on-site at a disaster or emergency ready to provide assistance. Because they are not associated with an NGO, the offers of help are often underutilized and even problematic to professional responders. Local,

state, and tribal governments should have a process to manage spontaneous or unaffiliated volunteers that includes credentialing them in conformance with the procedures this appendix.

## PIV Interoperable and Compatible Credentials

Using a national standardized format for credentials is not required for local, state, tribal, or territorial governments, private sector organizations, and NGOs. However, for Federal departments and agencies, HSPD-12 levies a specific requirement.

This section discusses Federal PIV cards and how partners that are not part of the Federal Government can apply the guidance to make their credentials interoperable or compatible with the PIV card.

### *Federal Government PIV Cards*

A PIV card is an identification card that contains appropriate levels of security and the necessary data for the cardholder to be granted access to certain facilities, information systems, and appropriate applications. PIV cards are issued by the Federal Government to its employees and contractors, and they conform to standards in FIPS 201. Using this standardized format ensures that PIV cards are interoperable with and trusted by all Federal departments and agencies and by partner organizations. Figure 3 includes an example of a PIV card visual for a FERO.

### *PIV-Related Options for Non-Federal Government Organizations*

FEMA encourages non-Federal authorities to use the FIPS 201 guidance for the credentials they issue. While only the Federal Government can issue PIV cards (because of certain Federal security requirements and processes), non-Federal Government issuers can use FIPS 201 guidance as provided in Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers. This document defines two types of PIV-related identification cards:

- *PIV Interoperable Card*: An identity card that meets the PIV technical specifications, allows non-Federal badges to work with PIV infrastructure elements such as card readers, and is issued in a manner that promotes Federal Government trust in the card.

- *PIV Compatible Card*: An identity card that meets the PIV technical specifications so that PIV infrastructure elements such as card readers are capable of working with the card, but the card itself has not been issued in a manner that assures it is trustworthy by Federal entities.

### *Customizing PIV Interoperable and PIV Compatible Credentials*

PIV Interoperable and Compatible cards should ideally have the same appearance, to be commonly recognized, yet still provide the flexibility to support individual agency or organizational requirements. Having a common look for PIV cards is important to meet the objectives of improved security and interoperability.

At a minimum, the visual aspects of both PIV Interoperable and Compatible cards should include:

- Photograph

- Name

- Employee Affiliation (i.e., civilian, contractor, or active duty)

- Organization

- Date Issued

- Expiration Date.

Organizations may customize PIV Interoperable and Compatible credentials by inserting their logos and other information, such as additional affiliation details, in certain locations. See FIPS 201 and Personal Identity Verification Interoperability for Non-Federal Issuers for information regarding the placement of mandatory and optional data. Figure 3 provides an example of the visual elements of the PIV format.



**Figure 3: Example of FIPS 201 PIV Card Format[16]**

*Other Alternatives*

Jurisdictions or organizations that choose not to or are unable to implement PIV Interoperable or Compatible card protocols are encouraged to issue credentials that use similar identifying information on their cards as the PIV card (e.g., name, company, issuance date, expiration date).

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[16] Graphic from "Personal ID Verification: Agencies Should Set a Higher Priority on Using the Capabilities of Standardized Identification Cards," United States Government Accountability Office, September 2011, pg. 8.

# Appendix D: Position Endorsements

AHJs use endorsements to verify specific education, training, experience, and fitness levels that an individual completes beyond the minimum qualifications for a given position. Endorsements indicate that the individual exceeds the baseline position qualification criteria.

A specific discipline or hazard may require endorsement to ensure safe and effective operations (e.g., hazardous materials incident response). An AHJ may create a discipline- or hazard-specific position endorsement to distinguish unique qualifications for specialization when necessary. This section describes a framework for AHJs to develop and implement discipline- or hazard-specific position endorsements. The AHJ should consider endorsements on a position-by-position basis.

Developing an endorsement does not alter the standard qualification criteria for the base position. If an AHJ endorses additional competencies or behaviors, it should give the trainee the opportunity to document mastery of those additional discipline- or hazard-specific competencies and/or behaviors by performing appropriately designed tasks. The trainee should meet both the normal position qualification criteria and the endorsement criteria to qualify for the position with the discipline- or hazard-specific position endorsement requirement. The endorsement involves additional criteria added to the baseline criteria, and it does not stand by itself as a qualification.

## Components of an Endorsement

Any discipline- or hazard-specific position endorsement should use the standard job title/position qualification format and criteria categories. These categories include demonstrated proficiency, education, training, experience, physical/medical fitness, currency, and professional and technical licenses and certifications. An endorsement may include additional criteria in one or more of the following three primary categories:

- *Proficiency*: For the purposes of an endorsement, a trainee can demonstrate proficiency through various methods, such as actual incident experience or a full-scale exercise. An AHJ may identify additional tasks or critical elements unique to a specific discipline or hazard, which in turn creates the AHJ's need for endorsements. All discipline- or hazard-specific tasks should relate directly back to the core competencies and behaviors for a specific position.

- *Training/Education*: Discipline- or hazard-specific training and education enhances an individual's ability to perform discipline- or hazard-specific tasks. Training should teach to the specific behaviors or tasks the AHJ identifies for the discipline- or hazard-specific position or endorsement.

- *Legal Requirements*: Legal requirements include any professional or technical certifications and licenses that a jurisdiction may require for an individual to work in the discipline- or hazard-specific position.

## Implementation of Endorsements

To add tasks to any of the existing PTBs for the purpose of endorsements, the AHJ adds additional PTB page(s) outlining the new discipline- or hazard-specific tasks. The AHJ typically inserts these pages at the end of existing PTBs. Endorsement criteria should align with the competencies and behaviors listed in the current PTB.

If an AHJ chooses to incorporate endorsements developed at the national level (e.g., that the U.S. Forest Service developed for wildland fire incidents or the U.S. Coast Guard developed for hazardous materials responses), the AHJ should incorporate the endorsement criteria without alteration.