



WESTMORELAND COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Public Safety Training Center  
65 Public Safety Drive  
Smithton, PA 15479-8734  
724-872-2447



## Firefighter I Certification Test Application and Testing Tips

The testing process for Firefighter I involves three steps:

- successfully completing the ten-page application;
- taking a 100-question, multiple choice examination and
- successfully completing all twelve (12) skill stations.

### THE APPLICATION – Step 1

The application form requires your close attention to make sure all the necessary documentation is attached, signatures are where they should be and you have answered all the questions. The test site will likely reject your application if it isn't complete. You are not permitted to sit for the written test until the application is complete (that is step 1).

Here are some tips to make sure you submit a complete application the first time:

- Before you complete any information, read through the whole application to understand what is required.
- NOTE: Make sure you complete the latest version of the application form available from the PA State Fire Academy website. Beginning with the January 1, 2011 edition, you may complete the form on-screen, which you should highly consider doing as it will make your application more legible.
- If not completing on-screen, use a black (or blue) ink pen.
- Print clearly; don't write.
- Use your complete name; no nicknames.
- Check ONE of the boxes on page 1, probably the first one for most candidates.
- Sign and date on page 1.
- Have a chief officer, fire chief, assistant chief, etc. sign and date on page 2. If you are a chief officer, you cannot sign for yourself; have another officer sign and date.
- You also sign and date on page 2.

- You must check at least TWO sets of boxes; one for first aid and the other for CPR.
- When copying wallet (or certification cards) for first aid and CPR, make sure you copy BOTH **the FRONT and the BACK** of the card; one side won't do.
- You must have current [within the past 12 months from the skills test date] hazardous materials training to at least the Operations level. Check one of the boxes.
- Your hazardous materials training certificate must be dated within one year from the scheduled written test date (your certification certificate doesn't have an expiration date).
- You must provide a certificate attesting to your Interior Structural Fire Attack. Check one of the boxes **OR**
- If you are using an older *Essentials of Firefighting* certificate (the 88-hr. class), it must satisfy all six (6) of the conditions listed on the application to be valid. In other words, you may only use an older Essentials certificate to satisfy the live burn requirement **at a certification test site that also provided the Essentials training. Check that box if all of the above six conditions are true.**
- Use the checklist on the last page to make sure you've completed all the areas-
  - Staple or paperclip your copied documents to the back of the application, preferably in the order in which they are requested in the application.
  - Under TESTING ASSISTANCE, Check the first two statements, if they are true, and the last box if you are NOT requesting an accommodation for national certification. NOTE: It's an EITHER/OR situation.
  - Sign and date the last page.
- Take some time before you mail the application to review every page for completeness-
  - Are there missing signatures?
  - Are all the questions answered?
  - Are all your documents attached?
- You will also need to submit a payment (check or money order, no cash) for the test fee. The current test fee at WCCC is **\$140**. Make your check or money order payable to: **WCCC**. Return your completed application packet to:
  - WCCC Public Safety Training Center  
65 Public Safety Dr.  
Smithton, PA 15479-8734
- If you have a question, call 724-872-2447, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

## THE WRITTEN EXAM – Step 2

The written test will generally be scheduled on a separate day (or evening) from the skills test. You should be notified by letter from the test site of the scheduled date and time. Be prompt (at least ten minutes early) as you will not be admitted if you're late. Bring one form of **photo identification** with you (a photo drivers license is fine). You should not bring any materials, textbooks, computers, back packs etc. They will not be permitted in the test room. Cell phones, pagers, PDAs, etc. will be turned off. You may bring one or two no. 2 pencils.

There are 100 multiple-choice questions. You will have two (2) hours to complete the exam. Most folks don't require that much time so don't hurry. You are not permitted to ask any questions after the test starts. Cheating is absolutely not permitted (you will be barred from further testing for one year). Besides, the person next to you may know less than you do, so don't cheat!

Read the question carefully and eliminate any obviously wrong answer(s). Pick the answer that is most correct. If you need to change an answer after thinking about it for a while, DON'T unless you have an overwhelming belief your first choice is wrong. Most 'first guesses' are generally correct; so don't change a right answer to a wrong one unless you're absolutely sure!

If you don't know the answer, skip that question and go on to the next one. Just make sure you leave a blank space on the answer form. Come back after you've answered all the remaining questions. You just might discover the answer to one question by reading another one later.

Look over your answer sheet after you're done to make sure you didn't leave any questions unanswered. There is no penalty for guessing, so don't leave any of them blank, take a guess.

Return all your materials to the test proctor and leave the test site. Go straight home and get a good nights rest if the skills test is the next day. If you haven't already done so, begin to drink plenty of clear fluids (no alcohol). You will perspire during the skill stations, so stay hydrated. It's important to do that all the time as an active firefighter so get into the good habit now of drinking plenty of water daily (at least eight 8-ounce glasses).

## THE SKILLS TEST – Step 3

Arrive the day of the test at the time your test site indicates. Fifteen [15] minutes early is preferred. Make sure you have a full set of turnout gear (helmet, hood, coat, gloves, pants, boots and eye protection) and your SCBA with PASS device. If you have a spare set of firefighting gloves, bring them. You may also want to bring a change of clothes (many test sites don't have shower and locker facilities, though). You can probably leave your gear in the car until after the candidate meeting.

You will receive a test site map, a list of the skill stations being tested and a routing card. You will also be partnered up with another candidate. Get to know your partner. You will sit through a candidate briefing by the test site coordinator and then report to the routing area. Get your gear and get ready to go.

Hold onto your routing card and give it to the evaluator at each station. Ask questions of the evaluator if you don't understand the instructions. You may also speak to the evaluator during the skills test, if you like (note, some stations will require you to verbalize what you're doing, namely during the SCBA Operational Check).

At the completion of the skill station, walk briskly back to the routing area for another assignment. Continue to hydrate all day long. Some test sites will provide a lunch, if not, bring a bag lunch and some energy bars. Water is generally available.

You are not permitted to have any skill sheets or 'cheat sheets' with you the day of the skills test. Leave them at home. The most important thing to remember is to wear the necessary PPE at each station and don't do anything that would constitute a safety violation. SAFETY is NUMBER ONE. A safety violation will mean an automatic failure.

You will probably be afforded an opportunity to repeat a failed skill station that day. However, here's the failure policy-

- If you fail **one, two or three** stations, you may repeat a station one more time that day.
  - If you fail a station a second time, you will have to come back to a future skills test to try again. You may attempt any other failed stations one more time.
- If you fail **four or more** stations initially, you may not repeat any failed stations that day. You will have to come back to another skills test. You have the option to finish any remaining skill stations, which you are encouraged to do.

Don't worry about failing, worry about passing! If you do what is expected and do it safely, you will probably pass. Evaluators are not permitted to tell you whether you passed. Only the candidate router or test site coordinator will talk to you about failures.

Don't forget to drink water throughout the day, even if you're not thirsty. If you are done with all the skill stations, you may be dismissed early. Before you leave, make sure you have all your PPE and SCBA. Complete a Candidate Critique form before leaving.

Most test sites are required to mail the results to the PA State Fire Academy in Lewistown within ten (10) days of the test date. The academy folks process thousands of test results every year. Be patient for your results. If it's a busy test time of the year (March to June or September to November), it might take a full six weeks. Otherwise, don't expect anything for about a month. If you need to contact the Fire Academy, the toll-free number is: **1-800-459-4096**.

You're encouraged to retest as soon as possible after you get your results, while the experience is still fresh in your mind (and, more importantly, while the skill stations you need are still being tested). Remember, six of the stations are random and change every three to six months. If you're going to fail a station, fail a mandatory station! Depending on the test site and the skill station, there may be a retest fee.

Tens of thousands of firefighters across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have successfully completed the Firefighter I testing process. If you are well prepared, ask questions, don't make any safety mistakes and if you look and act like you know what you're doing, you will probably pass, too. Even if you don't pass the first time, you can retest within one year. Remember, many medical professionals don't pass their medical boards the first time but ultimately pass; so can you.

## **AFTER YOU PASS**

When you receive your certificate and patches, wear them proudly. Make a copy of your certificate and give it to your chief or training officer that maintains your training file. Keep the original in a safe place.

Your local test fee now includes national certification registration with the two main groups, the National Professional Qualifications Board (the Pro Board) and the International Fire Service Accreditation (IFSAC). Expect to receive materials from those organizations about four weeks after you receive notification from the State Fire Academy.

You may also want to read the candidate handbook [follow the Certification link] located at the PA State Fire Academy website:  
**[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=11302&PageID=574048&mode=2&contentid=http://pubcontent.state.pa.us/publishedcontent/publish/cop\\_public\\_safety/state\\_fire\\_commissioner/certification/certification\\_levels\\_presently\\_offered/firefighter\\_i/firefighter\\_i.html](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=11302&PageID=574048&mode=2&contentid=http://pubcontent.state.pa.us/publishedcontent/publish/cop_public_safety/state_fire_commissioner/certification/certification_levels_presently_offered/firefighter_i/firefighter_i.html)**