

Division of Emergency Medical Services

Office of Fire Services

Firefighter I and II

Practical Skills Evaluator Training Course



Module 1 – Introduction

Course Goal	Upon the successful completion of this course, participants will be able to conduct skills evaluations and all related administrative functions in accordance with the Office of Fire Services, Division of Emergency Medical Services policies and procedures.
Course Overview	Course topics include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Module 1 - Introduction• Module 2 - Skills Testing Administration• Module 3 - Skills Testing Process• Module 4 - Skills Testing Policies and Procedures
Target Audience	Certified Fire Instructor and Assistant Fire Instructor requested or required to serve as skill evaluators on state certification practical examinations.
Delivery Method	The course delivery methodology consists of small group discussions, lectures, and participant activities.
Course Prerequisites	Participants must be state certified to the level they are evaluating.
Course Length	4 Hours
Registration/ Attendance	Your attendance is required in order to receive credit for this course. All participants must complete the course, sign the attendance roster, fill out the skill evaluator information sheet, and complete the evaluation at the end of the course to receive credit.

Instructor Note:

Collect and review all forms for accuracy and completeness:

- *Certification skills evaluator information sheet:*

This form must be maintained by the program director for tracking purposes

Module 2 – Skills Testing Administration

Goal

Upon the successful completion of this module, participants will be able to describe the administrative details required in administering a skills testing program.

Objectives

1. Describe the role that the Division of Emergency Medical Services play in the testing process.
2. Discuss the Ohio Revised Code 4765.55 and the Ohio administrative Code 4765 as it pertains to testing and state certification process.
3. Discuss the role that the National Board of Fire Service Professional Qualification (Pro Board) plays in the testing and certification process in Ohio.
4. Describe the role that evaluators play with respect to safety during skills testing.
5. Discuss the legal issues related to fair testing procedures.
6. List the expectations for skills evaluators to conduct themselves in a professional manner.
7. Describe the purpose of policies and procedures in the skills testing process.
8. Describe the ramification of not following policies and procedures.

Instructor Notes:

Module Time: 40 Minutes

In the past, the Division of Emergency Medical Services provided candidates a state certification based on the candidates ability to successful pass a written examination. Today, however, candidates have an option to gain nationally recognized certificates from the National Board of Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) in addition to Ohio firefighter certification with the addition of practical skill testing.

Certification is dependent on the candidate's ability to pass both written and practical skill tests. As an added benefit, several of our courses have college credit recommendations from the Ohio Board of Regents. The module focuses on:

- Pro Board
- Safety and legal issues
- American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and
- Professionalism

Instructor Note:

Ask participants, ***“Why is it important that we conduct this course?”***

Possible Answer:

- *To learn how to administer skills testing required by the state*
- *Required by the State or Pro Board*
- *To raise the bar for fire training in the state*

After a brief discussion suggest that another important reason is:

- *The qualities that make you a good instructor can often cloud your judgment and keep you from being a really good skills evaluator. In the teaching and learning process you are taught to*
- *Coach,*
- *Mentor,*
- *Assist,*
- *Tutor, and*
- *Help participants in any way.*

But all of those things have to be put aside when you become a skills evaluator.

Another important reason is you are the best of the best:

- *Best instructors (e.g., teaching, mentoring, helping, etc.)*
- *Customer service support, and*
- *Ability to adapt and change to meet participants and customer needs.*

All of these qualities hamper and interfere with being an evaluator for certification.

Division of Emergency Medical Services & National Board of Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) Certificate

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to define or explain Ohio certification process vs. Pro Board certificate.

Answer: The Ohio certification is required by all firefighters...Pro Board is an optional nationally recognized certificate that that the candidate has the option to submit an application and application fee upon the successful completion of the State of Ohio certification process.

Ask participants, “Why did Ohio become Pro Board accredited? What was required to become Pro Board accredited?”

*Answer: The Division of EMS became accredited to allow **all** approved fire charters to offer a nationally accredited Pro Board certificate. The Division of EMS was required to submit the following to be accredited:*

- *Self Study*
- *Site Visit*

Ask participants, “What is the focus of policies and procedures? What is the focus of the Division of EMS?”

Answer:

- *Standardization*
- *Consistency*

Ask participants, “Why would I want a nationally accredited certificate like Pro Board?”

Answer:

- *Third-party validation*
- *Training accepted outside Ohio*
- *Increased job market*



Agencies that achieve Pro Board accreditation are recognized as having met the rigors of review by an independent organization. This independent review is the best way to assure candidates and governing bodies that the training meets the national standards.

As an accredited agency of Pro Board, the Division of EMS has the authority to issue internationally recognized credentials to the candidates that demonstrate proficiency in Job Performance Requirements (JPR) specified in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. These professional credentials are given in the form of certificates.

The primary focus of the Division of EMS and Pro Board is the consistent delivery of valid and reliable tests that meet the NFPA standards.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to define accredited and certified.

Answer: Organizations are accredited and people are certified.

To ensure they understand this distinction ask them if our Firefighter I and II course is accredited?

Answer: No, we as an agency are accredited.

Then ask is this course certified?

Answer: No, the candidates who go through the course and pass are certified.

Basic Certification Concepts

This section provides a brief overview of several important terms and concepts related to certification. Understanding these basic terms and concepts helps provide a sound foundation for conducting proper skills evaluations.

We have already discussed the concept that organizations are accredited and individuals are certified. What then, is the difference between a certificate and a certification?

Certificate versus Certification

Instructor Note:

Ask participants, “If you were going to hire a new firefighter would, you prefer him/her to have a certificate of completion in firefighting training or an Ohio certification in fire fighting? Why?”

Answers should indicate they prefer a certification, because it will be based on a set of national standards and you would not know what a certificate of completion is based on.

A certificate:

- Often does not provide an indication of what the individual learned,
- Is associated with attendance, and
- Testing, if there is any, it's usually minimal

A certification:

- Is formal validation of knowledge and /or skill and
- Is based on specific criteria (e.g. NFPA objectives)

The purpose of certification is to identify individuals who demonstrate their knowledge and skills as they relate to a standard.

Certification Testing

Cut Score

The cut score is an important concept in certification. Unlike tests that are taken in school and college that compare individual results to each other, in certification all individuals are compared to the standard. As such, the only real issue in certification centers around the point where the individual either passes or fails. For example, if the cut score is 70, a score of 75, 80, or 90 are all the same in that all three individuals will be certified.

Validity

The key element to an effective testing program is to ensure that all testing materials go through a rigorous process to ensure all materials are valid and reliable.

Test validity refers to the degree to which the test actually measures what it is supposed to measure. In other words, does the test actually indicate a candidate's ability to perform a skill or task? If it does, then it is said to be a valid test.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to describe a test that is not valid.

Possible Answers: A hazardous Materials (HazMat) awareness test question about fire suppression (while the fire suppression questions might be very well written they do not pertain to the subject of HazMat awareness).

Reliability

Reliability ensures the test is dependable. It is the extent to which the test provides consistent, accurate results each time it is used. A test should be reliable from the perspective of the candidate and the evaluator.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants why it is important for a test to be reliable.

Possible Answers: Answer should include that all participants should have an equal opportunity at passing. You do not want some people passing or failing because a test is given differently each time.

Inter-rater reliability

Inter-rater reliability is the degree to which two or more individuals (evaluators or raters) agree. Inter-rater reliability then refers to the consistency of the implementation of a rating (or grading) system.

Instructor Note:

- *To point out the impact of inter-rater reliability, tell the participants that they are all evaluators observing a candidate (you the instructor) donning your Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).*
- *The directions indicate that the candidate is to raise his/her hands above their head and say “done” when complete.*
- *Now, you should raise your hands so the tips of your fingers are just above the top of your head and say “done”.*
- *Ask the participants how many of them would pass you. Next, ask how many would fail you.*

Some participants should say that you failed because you did not really raise your hands above your head, while others say the raising of your hands to the height of your head is the same as above your head.

- *After discussing this, ask participants what happens to the candidates in this situation (some would pass and some would fail for doing the exact same thing).*
- *Discuss the importance of inter-rater reliability and how evaluators need to be on the same page so that all candidates are judged equally.*

American with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Department of Justice ADA, Title III, Regulation 28, Part 36, states that, “Any private entity that offers tests or courses related to applications, licensing, certification, or credentialing, for secondary or post secondary education, professional, or trade purposes shall offer such tests or courses in a place accessible to persons with disabilities or offer alternative accessible arrangements for such individuals.”

Request for ADA modifications must be approved and coordinated with the Division of EMS (DEMS), Office of Fire Services, prior to the candidate participating in skills testing.

What do you do if you are evaluating a skill and someone claims an ADA disability and the candidates or the instructor has not contacted the DEMS? In this situation you shall notify the Program Director who will contact the DEMS, Office of Fire Services. It is important to note that all accommodation must be made through the Office of Fire Services prior to evaluating a candidate requesting a disability accommodation.

If the evaluator/program director cannot make arrangements with the Office of Fire Services then tell the candidate that the program director will contact the DEMS to coordinate the accommodation and set another test date. Skills evaluators cannot make the decision related to ADA test accommodations.

ADA accommodations must be recognized conditions as described in Title III, Regulation 28, Part 36.

Test anxiety is not an ADA-recognized disability.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to name some recognized ADA disabilities.

Answer: *For an impairment to be a legal disability, it must be long term. Temporary impairments, such as pregnancy or broken bones, are not covered by ADA. Determining what is a recognized disability is not always easy. Examples of an ADA-recognized disability may include a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (such as the ability to walk, talk, see, hear, breathe, reason, work, or take care on oneself). Courts tend not to categorically characterize certain conditions as disabilities. Instead, they consider the effect of the particular condition on the particular individual.*

Safety and Legal Issues in Skill Evaluating

Standards in testing and assessment have their roots in civil rights legislation and professional standards derived from the legal principles. The unifying theme behind the standards is the occupational testing and assessment should be unbiased and fair to all groups. Also important where the law is concerned is the factor of safety. The information that follows is a brief overview of some of the legal principles and issues that may impact the skills evaluation process.

Instructor Note:

Conduct a short discussion by asking, “These skills tests have been designed by subject matter experts and follow NFPA guidelines. What possible safety issues could there be?”

Answers will vary but should include inclement weather (too hot, too cold, or electrical storms), reckless candidates, careless evaluators, and malfunctioning equipment.

Safety Factors

Firefighter safety is the number one priority in the fire fighting profession and is a priority in instructional settings, specifically during skills testing. Where safety is concerned, it is the skill evaluator's role to inform the program director when it is felt that a candidate poses a safety risk to himself/herself, other candidates, skills evaluators, or equipment during skills testing. Safety is also dependent on materials and equipment being in proper working order. Evaluators should ensure that equipment, facilities, and conditions do not pose a safety risk to candidates or staff.

- Two areas of particular importance are:
- *Emergency medical support:* Contact information should be available for emergency medical personnel. Emergency medical transport must be available for the skills test site, if needed.
- *Facility and equipment inspection:* Evaluators should inspect the facility prior to conducting skills testing to ensure that testing area is safe, can be made secure, and can accommodate all requirements of the skills. All equipment must be checked prior to testing to ensure everything is in working order prior to starting skills testing.

Legal Issues

In the classroom, fire instructors try to create a sense of realism for the candidates. The same holds true for skills testing. In general, the more realistic the skills testing is, the better the chance for evaluators to determine a candidate's competence and success. Considering safety first, it soon becomes necessary to balance simulation with reality. For example, live fire might be used to practice offensive fire attacks, but safety routes and back-up lines should be in place prior to crew entry.

Proving breach of duty or failure to act in a reasonable and prudent manner creates one of the most important elements for a plaintiff; therefore, evaluators should be aware that they can be found negligent for wrongful performance (malfeasance) or for not performing when action should have been taken (nonfeasance).

In a number of court cases related to training accidents, instructors and evaluators did not willfully do anything wrong. However, unintentional acts and negligence are often the most common causes cited for accidents and injuries. Unintentional acts are those that occur without the willful intent to do harm. Negligence is the failure to use reasonable care (i.e., doing something that a reasonably prudent person would not do or the failure to do something that a reasonably prudent person would do under similar circumstances). To reduce liability, the evaluator must ensure:

- all equipment is in working order;
- surrounding conditions are acceptable and do not pose risks to the candidates.
- candidates are in proper physical condition to perform skills testing;
- candidates do not pose a risk to themselves or others;
- equipment is regularly checked for safe operating conditions; and
- candidate information is kept private, according to policy.

The main point is that evaluators must learn to analyze risks associated with all high-hazard training to control the realistic situation.

Other legal issues to be aware of, such as:

- Discrimination;
- Sexual Harassment;
- Hostile Environment;
- Discriminatory Language;

Professionalism

Instructors/Evaluators must remember that when conducting skills tests they are acting as representatives for Ohio Department of Public Safety, the Division of EMS, the charter training program, and your profession. You are expected to act in a professional manner at all times which includes not speaking negatively about the agencies involved in this process.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to list some do's and don'ts related to acting in a professional manner when conducting skills test.

Possible Answers:

- *No cell phones*
- *No looking off at other things going on*
- *No eating or using tobacco products (e.g., dip, smoking, etc.)*
- *Take task seriously*
- *Do not try to pack up gear during the last one or two candidates' tests so you can leave the testing area site quickly*
- *Do not talk/joke with other evaluators during a candidate's test*
- *Dress appropriately*
- *Use proper language*

Evaluator Tendencies

Along with inter-rater reliability, another area that evaluators must pay attention to is evaluator tendencies or biases. Evaluators must try to remain neutral when observing and scoring candidates. Some of the common evaluator tendencies are:

Halo Effect

The halo effect is the tendency to rate someone high or low in all categories because he/she is high or low in one or two areas. The halo effect occurs when an evaluator's personal opinion and general impression about a candidate influences the measurement of his/her actual performance.

Leniency Effect

This is the tendency to give all candidates high scores. This is usually accompanied by some rationalization as to why this is appropriate. Harshness is the tendency to score everyone lower than is warranted.

Stringency Effect

This is the tendency to give all candidate low scores. Some evaluators tend to be strict because they think it will enhance their image as hard taskmasters.

Central Tendency Effect

This is the tendency to use only the middle portion of the rating scale and score everyone average.

Personal Bias

This is the tendency to allow non-job-related prejudices and stereotypes about different cultures, lifestyles, personalities, or appearances to affect the evaluation of a candidate.

Recency Effect

This is the tendency of an evaluator to rate a candidate on events that occurred during the period before the test. Recent actions, either good or bad, are more likely to be remembered by the evaluator.

Error of Perception

At times, evaluators tend to give higher marks to candidates they perceive to be more important than others and vice versa, instead of measuring their actual performance.

Remember, your role as an evaluator is to observe the candidate and determine if they can successfully perform the skills as stated on the skill sheets or not. Be aware of these tendencies and try not to let actions of the candidates influence your observations and scoring.

Activity – Evaluator Tendencies

Purpose: To allow participants to identify and recognize common evaluator tendencies.

Instructor Directions:

1. *This can be either an individual or group activity as time allows*
2. *Have participants read each scenario and determine which evaluator tendency is being exhibited.*
3. *After participants have completed the activity, randomly call on them for answers for discussion.*
4. *Some of these will have two or more answers. Some participants may be able to rationalize other possible answers to the scenarios. This is acceptable; remember, the point is that they become aware of these and should try to avoid them.*

Scenario 1

Jack was recently given an award by one of the local fire department for actions above and beyond the call of duty. He is now in your test group. You notice during the course he is proficient at donning Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); however, during the evaluation he does not pull on his hood. Because he is exceptional firefighter you let this slide and pass him.

Answer: *Recency Effect*

Scenario 2

Jennifer was the fastest in class at donning PPE. She was also the most capable at naming the parts and had a surprising amount of additional information that she brought to class during discussions of PPE. You feel that you do not really need to test her on the use of PPE because you are certain that she already has the required knowledge.

Answer: *Halo Effect*

Scenario 3

The crew of firefighters in your class has just returned from working long hours at a major fire in Northwest Ohio. They are tired and dragging, but their department did not want to reschedule their testing. You figure that you will give them the benefit of the doubt and go easy on scoring them.

Answer: *Leniency*

Scenario 4

When reviewing the skill tests for a certification course, the Office of Fire Services notices that all candidates scored unusually high when compared with other groups. While it is possible that everyone performed at an exceptional level, it is also possible that the evaluator was exhibiting which one of the evaluator tendencies?

Answer: *Leniency*

Indicates to participants that the Office of Fire Services carefully reviews all skills sheets.

Scenario 5

After a long day of testing, the last candidate approaches your station, which consists of 14 specific tasks. After an outstanding performance on the first five tasks, you think, "Wow, glad this last one is so sharp; I can start arranging my materials and get ready to pack up and get out of here."

Answer: *Halo*

Ask participants what else is wrong in this scenario. The evaluator was not focusing on his/her entire attention on the candidate. What if the last item on the checklist was a pass/fail that the candidate was confused about? What would the ramifications be if the candidate was certified yet injured himself / herself or others because he/she did not know that one part of the skill?

Module Summary

In this module we discussed some of the outside agencies that play an important role in shaping our testing policies and procedures. We also discussed that skills evaluators play an important role in ensuring the safety and equity of our testing program. We began to discuss policies and procedures by detailing their importance and ramifications of not strictly adhering to them. In the next module we will cover the mechanics of the skills testing process and go over the policies and procedures in detail.

Module 3 – Skills Testing Process

Goal

Upon the successful completion of this module, participants will be able to describe the administrative details required in administering a skills testing program.

Objectives

1. Describe the specific functions of the Program Director, skills evaluators, holding stations, and skills testing stations.
2. Identify the components that comprise the skills checklist used to document candidate's performance.
3. Describe the purpose and function of team checklists and evaluation cards.
4. Explain mandatory skills versus random skills
5. Discuss the skills that can be conducted on the "Flip the Switch" day
6. Discuss three ways to prepare candidates for skills evaluating.
7. State the process for beginning the skills test including provision for reading directions and coaching.
8. Describe the expectation for evaluators while observing participants during testing.
9. Discuss the components of the practical skill sheets.
10. State the importance of accurately and completely filling out the skills sheets.
11. Identify errors made by evaluators on skills checklist.
12. Describe the procedures for retesting candidates that fail their initial test.
13. Describe the process for collecting testing materials and returning them to the Program Director.
14. Evaluate participants during a skills test and complete the skills sheets.
15. Determine appropriate responses and actions for given scenarios based on the DEMS testing policies and procedures.

Instructor Note:

Module Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

Introduction

Some certification courses requires a skills testing component along with the written test. The skills test for certification is composed of skills stations that measure the candidates' abilities to perform the specific tasks as outlined in the specific National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard. This module focuses on:

- types of skills assessments,
- preparing for the skills testing;
- conducting the skills test,
- concluding the skills test, and
- policies and procedures.

Policies and procedures provide you with a set of guidelines to follow so that each skills test administration is conducted consistently and provides optimal and fair testing to all candidates.

Evaluators should be thoroughly familiar with the testing procedures before administering the test. They should carefully follow *all* standardized administration and procedures. Testing procedures will indicate the skills test materials needed and the instructions that must be read verbatim. Testing procedures will also indicate whether there are time limits, and if so, what they are. Any special requirements for specific equipment or facilities should also be included. Failure to follow the outlined testing procedures can invalidate skills test results.

There are three policies for skills testing (one for the program director, skills evaluators, and skills coordinator).

It is critical that you follow all skills testing procedures. If any questions or anomalies arise, call the Office of Fire Services immediately.

Failure to follow skills testing procedures or provide a proper testing environment could:

- invalidate the test results in all candidates having to retake the skills test;
- cause candidates to challenge the skills test and test results;
- result in suspension of testing privileges, and
- revocation of the charter training program.

Because of the critical nature of adhering to policies and procedures, skills evaluators can be removed from all evaluator duties by the Executive Director of the Division of EMS at anytime for several reasons. These reasons include, but are not limited to, falsification of skills sheets; inconsistent, incomplete, or incorrect skill sheets; or putting a candidate in danger.

Type of Skills Assessment

Performance-Based (Skill) Assessments

Performance – based (skill) assessment evaluates hands-on skills such as fire suppression. Skills sheet checklists are created through Office of Fire Services with the help of subject matter experts from around Ohio. The Office of Fire Services and the Firefighter and Fire Safety Inspector Training Committee continue to work with many organizations and subject matter experts (SME) to develop and review these skill sheets to meet the intent of the NFPA standards.

Preparing for Skills Testing

To prepare for conducting skills tests it is important to go over some of the key elements and components that are part of the testing process. To effectively conduct skills tests, evaluators and coordinators must be familiar with the entire testing process. Our certification skills testing process includes seven key components:

- policies and procedures,
- program director,
- skills coordinator,
- skill evaluators,
- testing material and equipment,
- skills test holding areas, and
- Skill stations.

Policies and Procedures

As mentioned before, policies and procedures provide you with a set of guidelines to follow so that each skills administration is conducted consistently and provides optimal and fair testing to all candidates. Each of the main topics in this module is derived from the policies and procedures and must be followed exactly as stated. Policy documents will be reviewed in detail at the end of the module.

Program Director/Skills Coordinator

The program director/skills coordinator is responsible for distributing and collecting skills test materials to and from skills evaluators. Program director/Skills coordinators are also responsible for the overall setup of skills stations and holding areas so the candidates are tested efficiently and confidentially. Program director/Skills coordinators may delegate to additional personnel as needed to direct candidates between skills stations and holding areas. The skills coordinator shall not serve as an evaluator and is responsible for ensuring that all skills sheets are complete, accurate, and accounted for prior to approving them for the written examination.

Program director/Skills coordinators are also responsible for providing for the safety of participants and for ensuring that emergency medical support is available during testing.

Program director/Skills coordinators may also be required to address specific testing issues with candidates. As the skills coordinator, you may have to remind them that we are not certifying them on specific equipment but to perform certain tasks outlined in the NFPA standard.

You must remember that skills evaluator shall not evaluate any skills that they taught (instructor of content) during the course and that you are acting as a testing official strictly on a pass/fail basis. You can not coach or help candidates in any way during the skills testing.

All skills evaluators must go through training prior to evaluating candidates for a specific certification level. Training shall be conducted by the charter training program staff and can be accomplished in a face-to-face class. In addition evaluators must go through annual refresher training to maintain their evaluator status. Documentation of proof will be kept by the charter and made available to the Division of EMS, Office of Fire Services by request.

- Skills evaluators are responsible for setting up the necessary conditions of a skills station with its particular facility and equipment requirements.
- The skills evaluator must be consistent and impartial in administering the skills test. Because of possible conflicts of interest, instructors are not allowed to evaluate candidates for the skills that they taught during class. For example, if you taught donning SCBA in class, you cannot be the evaluator for that skills test; instead you will evaluate another skill such as ropes.
- Skills evaluators are required to be certified to the level they are evaluating. All evaluator must be Ohio certified instructors.
- In addition, if there are several skills stations, the skills coordinator may need to designate someone to manage the movement of candidates from one skill station to the next.
- Any accommodation made for test takers with disabilities recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must be documented on the skill sheets of the candidate. All accommodations must be approved by the Division of EMS, Office of Fire Services prior to the test.

Flip the Switch Skills

“Flip the Switch” testing method allows the chartered training program to

Skills Test Holding Areas

One or more skills test holding areas must be arranged so that candidates are efficiently directed to and from skills stations without the opportunity to observe other candidates' skills performances.

In addition, candidates cannot be allowed to speak to other candidates about skills tests they have completed until all candidates have completed that skills test. This helps to ensure that no candidate has an unfair advantage in the skill tests; failure to comply may invalidate a candidate's test score and subject the approved fire charter to possible disciplinary action.

Skills Test Station

Prior to conducting practical examinations, evaluators shall inspect the location and determine the layout of the testing areas. Skills stations should be set up to efficiently move candidates through the process. The skill stations need to be clearly identified and/or marked off so that it is obvious to candidates, observers, and passersby. The following should be adhered to when conducting skills testing:

- Skills tests are to be located near holding areas and contain the facilities and equipment requirements listed on the skills station instructions.
- Skills evaluators should select a location within the skills station area where they can observe all of the required skills performance items clearly.
- Skills stations must be arranged so that candidates at one station cannot view the other skill stations.

Test Materials

Skills stations will have one or more skills sheets for evaluating a candidate's performance. Some skills tests are mandatory (M) and will be included in every test administration, while others are Random (R) and will be randomly selected by the Office of Fire Services from the group specified.

All practical skills sheets have the following components:

- primary task
- job performance requirements (JPR's)

- reference source
- skill number
- candidate instructions
- time allotted
- performance steps
- list of performance steps;
- initial test or retest sections;
- critical point and/or Non-Critical skills;
- required score on non-critical skills;
- evaluators comments,
- overall indication of pass/fail for entire skill; and
- signatures lines.

It is important that you complete the performance skill evaluation form clearly and accurately. Failing any critical point item will result in failing that skill. The candidate must be stopped after failing a critical point, even if he/she misses a critical point early in the testing process. The skill evaluator shall stop the candidate immediately if a safety issue arises.

When the candidate has completed the skill, immediately complete the practical skill evaluation form, indicate whether the individual passed or failed, and then inform the candidate if he/she passed the skill.

If he/she failed the skill, the skill evaluator must complete the evaluator comment on the skill evaluation and indicate to the candidate what areas he/she failed. If this was their initial test, go over the retest procedures and send them to the appropriate area for remediation and practice.

Instructor Note:

Emphasize to participants that skills evaluators must write notes on the practical skill evaluation if a candidate fails.

Team Practical Skill Evaluations

There are some skills that can only be accomplished in a team setting, for example, skills involving live fire and some rescue skills. In team skills, candidates work as a team; however, they are evaluated separately as to their competence to perform a specific skill. For example, if one candidate fails his/her part of the team skills, and then only that person fails that skill set, not the whole team.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants how they would handle a team skill where five candidates fail and ten pass.

***Answer:** Program Director and/or Skill Coordinators should tell each candidate confidentially if they passed or failed after all skills are completed. As in individual skills, indicate what the candidate failed. Allow candidates to practice before retesting. When retesting, all candidates remain in their original roles/stations, however only the candidate(s) who failed the first time are evaluated.*

Practical Skill Evaluation with an Assistant

There are some skills that can only be accomplished with an assistant, for example, skills involving salvage covers. In skills requiring an assistant, candidates work with an approved evaluator; however, they must verbal to the assistant exactly what task to perform. The student will be evaluated as to their competence to perform a specific skill.

Practical Skills Testing Process

Beginning the Skills Station Test

Most people feel some anxiety about taking a test. For some otherwise qualified individuals, test anxiety can have a paralyzing effect on their performance. There are a few things that can be done to alleviate anxiety.

- Before testing begins, give test-takers a brief orientation explaining the purpose of the test and the testing process.
- Start the sessions promptly. A long wait will raise anxiety level among test-takers. All testing materials, equipment, and facilities should be ready in advance of the scheduled sessions. A thought out and organized test session will help to reduce test anxiety.
- When a candidate arrives at your skill station, you should meet him/her in a friendly and professional manner. Remember you are acting in an official

capacity as a skills evaluator for the state and national certification testing process.

After meeting the candidate and determining that he/she is ready, you will start the testing process by reading the candidates instructions verbatim from the practical skill sheet. Skills evaluators must limit their instructions to those which are specified on the skill sheet. No verbal or nonverbal “coaching” can be done to assist candidates in their performance of the skill.

If the skills station has multiple skills that are lengthy, or complex, the skill instructions may be read and performed in stages, as long as it is consistently done among all candidates. This will likely be included in the skill instructions. Coaching or assisting, however well meaning or unintentional, may invalidate the test and ultimately result in the candidate having to retake the test.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants to describe ways that the evaluators could coach either inadvertently or on purpose?

Answer:

- *Tapping watch*
- *Gestures with eyes*
- *Clearing the throat or asking “are you sure”*
- *Conversing with candidates*
- *Assisting the candidate with material, equipment, etc.*

Observing Candidate Performance

It is important to remember that you are in the role of an evaluator for a state and nationally recognized certificate. You are acting in an official capacity for the State of Ohio and the Pro Board. There is an important responsibility to the Ohio fire service and to the citizens of Ohio to make sure that the candidate certified in a skill can competently perform the task in the real world. It is expected that all evaluators conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner at all times.

The evaluator’s focus should be entirely on observing the performance of the candidate. All phones or electronic devices are turned off or put on silent. The evaluator should have all equipment ready so that they can start testing as soon as the candidate arrives at the skill station.

Completing Skill Evaluations

While observing the candidate, you must check the appropriate pass/fail box on the skill evaluation. Incomplete, inaccurate, or missing evaluations may invalidate a candidate's test results.

Immediately after the candidate has completed the skill, the evaluator should review the skill evaluation to make certain they have:

- Charter Name, Charter #, Lead Evaluator, and their Certification Number;
- Clearly marked pass/fail on each task and recorded their score;
- Recorded evaluator comments,
- Marked overall pass or fail for the entire skill at the bottom of the evaluation form; and
- Clearly and legibly sign and date form.

The skill evaluation form must be completed during and immediately after the candidates' skill test. Skill evaluations can not be completed at a later time. Skill evaluations must remain with the evaluator or skills coordinator at all times; candidates cannot have access to the skill evaluation forms at any time.

Instructor Note:

Ask participants what might happen after a serious accident has occurred during a candidate training or testing? Has anyone had an experience where investigators were looking into the training of those involved in the accident? How would you feel if the investigators found incomplete objective check-offs or incomplete/ inaccurate skill evaluation forms for those involved in the accident? The point of the practical skills testing is to certify individuals that can demonstrate competency, and those that cannot.

Retesting

If the candidates pass your skill station, send them to the holding area or to the next skill station. If the candidate fails, explain the guidelines for skills retesting are as follows:

- Candidates has one retest opportunity on their initial examination date and should be given time to remediate before retesting on that day. The candidate must wait one business day before attempting their third and final attempt at any skill. The program director must view all third attempts.
- The lead instructor who taught the content in the course cannot evaluate the initial test or the retest.

- Retests must be completed in their entirety, not just the item missed on the initial test.
- Use the same skill evaluation form that was used for the initial test and complete the retest column.
- All retests must be completed within *12 months* of the start date of the course. All retest shall be completed at the candidate's original fire training institution unless an approved fire charter agrees and receives written authorization of course completion from the candidate's original fire training charter.
- If the candidate fails all three attempts at a particular skill or does not complete the written examination in the specified time frame, then he/she must successfully retake the course in order to be certified to that level.

Final Processing

After all candidates have completed their initial tests and retest, the skills coordinator must make sure that all candidates have been accounted for. The skill sheets should be reviewed by the skills coordinator for accuracy. The skills coordinator must make sure that all materials are secured and delivered to the program director.

The program director must validate that the candidates have successfully passed the practical skills examination and are eligible to sit for the written state examination.

The program director shall meet with all candidates prior to the third attempt to ensure has remediated and understand the retest process. All third attempts shall be observed by the program director.

Module 4 – Policies and Procedures

Program Director Guidelines for Practical Skills Testing

Before Testing:

1. Plan and coordinate your testing with your skills coordinator prior to the first day of class. Confirm date, time, and locations of testing.
2. Ensure skills coordinator has scheduled the skill evaluator prior to the start of the course. The practical and written examination should be included in the planning of your course delivery. A lead instructor in a specific topic and/or skill during the course cannot be a skill evaluator for that skill station.
3. Ensure your skill coordinator has the equipment, resources, and materials needed for skill stations.
4. Plan and make arrangements for rotation of skills stations and the necessary equipment. Testing stations are set up to ensure candidates can test in a comfortable and secure environment, limiting viewing by other candidates.

Day of the Test:

1. Brief skill coordinator and other staff assisting in the rotation of skill stations and plan for scheduling candidates retests. You must rotate skill evaluators for retesting. No candidate should be tested and retested by the same skill evaluator.
2. Ensure skill coordinator and skill evaluators keep a professional appearance, in both dress and actions (i.e. not eating or using tobacco products).
3. Ensure all candidates are evaluated on each individual skill stations.
4. Candidates who have finished a station should not come in contact with each other who have not tested at that station. This gives the candidates testing later an unfair advantage.
5. Evaluators must read directly from the candidate instructions on the skill sheets, giving no additional instructions. If the skill coordinator feels an evaluator is deviating from the evaluator guidelines, it is his/her responsibility to take corrective action and notify the program director. The program director must notify the Division of EMS, Office of Fire Services immediately of any compromise.

Important: In event that a skills evaluator feels that a candidate poses a safety risk to himself/herself, other candidates, skills evaluators, or equipment during their skills testing, stop the examination and immediately notify the skills coordinator. If the candidate is the cause of the safety risk, the skill is considered a failure and the candidate is allowed to retest after remediation. If the candidate is not the cause (i.e. equipment malfunction) the candidate is allowed to repeat the initial skill.

The program director will have the final authority in the event of a conflict of opinion.

Retesting:

1. Program directors will oversee any retesting that needs to occur and ensures candidates understand retest procedures.
2. The candidates are notified after completing the skill of the item(s) he/she failed and given adequate opportunity to remediate before they take a retest.

3. The candidate is permitted to retest the failed skill(s) test one time on the skills examination date. If the candidates are unsuccessful they will be permitted one retest at the failed skill station(s). No retests are permitted after 12 months from the start date of the course.
4. The Division of EMS, Office of Fire Services will issue an approval letter for all examination challenges. Candidate shall present letter to the charter before testing. All practical and written testing must be completed within 12 months from the approval date of any examination challenges.
5. The candidates must successfully pass all skill stations before sitting for the state written examination.
6. The instructor of content being tested must not be the evaluator for the candidate's initial or retest.
7. The retest evaluator is to complete the retest column on the original skill sheet and sign the form. The retest must be performed in its entirety, not just the portion the candidates failed previously. If the candidate fails the third attempt at the failed skill, they must retake the course.
8. The chartered training program may charge a fee for retesting and challenges.

After testing:

Keep skill sheets secured at all times. Candidates should never handle his/her skill sheets.

Review all skill sheets to ensure proper completion. Once the skill sheets have been signed off, any lost or incomplete checklists may be considered an incomplete for the candidate. If the skill sheets are considered an incomplete, the candidate must repeat all skill stations tested that day.

Ensure all skill sheets are completed properly and that the candidates are eligible to sit for their written certification examination.

Interrupted Skills:

When or if skills are interrupted, due to circumstances beyond the candidate's control, the candidate is allowed to return to the skills station and redo the initial skill from the beginning.

The initial evaluator is allowed to do evaluate the candidate again, as this is considered his/her initial examination. The evaluator cannot tell the candidate which areas he/she did not perform correctly, as that can only happen when the candidate completes the skill in its entirety.

The candidate is also allowed a retest opportunity if he/she fails this skill. The retest is to be performed in accordance with the retest procedures.

Skills Coordinator Guidelines for Practical Skills Testing

Before Testing:

1. Plan and coordinate your testing with the program director prior to the first day of class. Confirm date, time, and locations of testing.
2. Ensure skills evaluators are scheduled prior to the start of the course. The practical and written examination should be included in the planning of your course delivery. A lead instructor in a specific topic and/or skill during the course cannot be a skill evaluator for that skill station.
3. Ensure you have the equipment and materials needed for each skill stations.
4. Make arrangements for rotation of skills stations and the necessary equipment and materials. Ensure skill stations are set up so the candidates can test in a comfortable and secure environment, limiting viewing by other candidates.

Day of the Test:

1. Brief skill evaluators in the rotation of the skill stations and plan for scheduling candidates retests. You must rotate skill evaluators for retesting. No candidate should be tested and retested by the same skill evaluator.

2. Ensure skill evaluators keep a professional appearance, in both dress and actions (i.e. not eating or using tobacco products).
3. Assign evaluators to skill stations, distribute skill sheets, and the Practical Skill Evaluators Guidelines to the evaluators. Ensure each skill station is in a state of readiness and all evaluators have read and understand the evaluator guidelines.
4. Evaluators must read directly from the candidate instructions on the skill sheets, giving no additional instructions. If the skill coordinator feels an evaluator is deviating from the evaluator guidelines, it is his/her responsibility to take corrective action and notify the program director immediately.
5. Ensure skill evaluators are focused on the testing and not talking to other evaluators or other candidates during testing. Distractions for the candidates must be resolved to ensure fair testing and limited anxiety. Electronic devices must be placed on silent/vibrate/mute to reduce distractions.
6. Ensure testing at the various stations is confidential and that adequate personnel are available to cover holding area(s) and direct candidates between stations.
7. Ensure all candidates are evaluated on each individual skill stations.
8. Candidates who have finished a station should not come in contact with each other who have not tested at that station. This gives the candidates testing later an unfair advantage.

Important: In event that a skills evaluator feels that a candidate poses a safety risk to himself/herself, other candidates, skills evaluators, or equipment during their skills testing, stop the examination and immediately notify the skills coordinator. If the candidate is the cause of the safety risk, the skill is considered a failure and the candidate is allowed to retest after remediation. If the candidate is not the cause (i.e. equipment malfunction) the candidate is allowed to repeat the initial skill.

The program director will have the final authority in the event of a conflict of opinion.

Retesting:

1. The skill coordinator will organize any retesting that needs to occur.

2. The candidate is permitted to retest the failed skill(s) test one time on the skills examination date. If the candidates are unsuccessful they will be permitted one retest at the failed skill station(s).
3. The instructor of content being tested must not be the evaluator for the candidates initial or retests.

After testing:

Keep skill sheets secured at all times. Candidates should never handle his/her skill sheets.

Review all skill sheets to ensure proper completion. Once the skill sheets have been signed off, any lost or incomplete checklists may be considered an incomplete for the candidate. All missing and /or incomplete skill sheets will require candidate(s) to retest those skills sheets that are missing.

Make arrangements to return all testing materials to the program director or written test proctor.

Interrupted Skills:

When or if skills are interrupted, due to circumstances beyond the candidate's control, the candidate is allowed to return to the skills station and redo the initial skill from the beginning. The initial evaluator is allowed to do evaluate the candidate again, as this is considered his/her initial examination. The evaluator cannot tell the candidate which areas he/she did not perform correctly, as that can only happen when the candidate completes the skill in its entirety.

The candidate is also allowed a retest opportunity if he/she fails this skill. The retest is to be performed in accordance with the retest procedures.

Practical Skills Evaluator Guidelines For Practical Skills Testing

The instructor of content being tested must not be the evaluator for the candidates initial or retests.

1. Prior to evaluating a skill, review and become familiar with the skill sheet.
2. Arrive at testing site early to make sure all equipment and materials are available and functioning, and have full understanding of skill evaluating.
3. Get logistical, testing, and retesting instructions from the skill coordinator. If the skill is timed, make sure a stopwatch is available prior to starting the skills. Ensure you have skill instructions and enough skill sheets for all the candidates.
4. Skill evaluators must keep a professional appearance in both dress and actions (i.e. not eating or using tobacco products). Electronic devices should be put on mute/vibrate/silent while evaluating skills to reduce distraction for the candidates.
5. Greet each candidate in a friendly and professional manner and introduce yourself. Give name or brief description and order of the skills to be tested at the station. All attention should be focused on the candidate being tested, not talking to other evaluators or candidates.
6. Make sure the candidates full name is at the top of the skill sheets. No nickname or portion of name.

7. Read the candidates instructions verbatim from the skill sheets. Do not add additional instructions or information not written on the sheet.
8. Ask the candidates if they understand the instructions. If the candidate states they do not understand the instructions, the evaluator is to read the verbatim again from the sheet. If there is still confusion, the candidate is pulled aside and the skill coordinator can discuss the instructions with them. After the candidate understands, begin the skill.
9. Allow the candidate to complete the entire skill, even if he/she misses/fails items(s). Intervene only if there is a safety issue involved.
10. When the candidate tells the evaluator he/she is complete, that is it. The candidate cannot come back and say they forgot something and are allowed to perform that additional skill.
11. Check Pass or Fail for each skill item. Note the duration of time on the sheet when required, do not round up or down.
12. Determine the candidate's performance by checking if all skills are marked pass or failed correctly. Ensure the skill sheet is completed in its entirety, including evaluator signature and date.
13. When the candidate has completed all stations, notify the candidate whether or not he/she passed all skill stations. If the candidate did not pass, inform the candidate of what area was failed and that he/she can retest after they have had time to practice and/or be remediated. The evaluator must document on skill sheet why the candidate did not pass. The instructor of content being tested cannot perform the retest. The entire skill must be completed again by the candidate, not just the items failed.

Important: In event that a skills evaluator feels that a candidate poses a safety risk to himself/herself, other candidates, skills evaluators, or equipment during their skills testing, stop the examination and immediately notify the skills coordinator. If the candidate is the cause of the safety risk, the skill is considered a failure and the candidate is allowed to retest after remediation. If the candidate is not the cause (i.e. equipment malfunction) the candidate is allowed to repeat the initial skill.

The program director will have the final authority in the event of a conflict of opinion.

14. Instruct the candidate to go to the next skill station or the appropriate staging area if there candidates being tested at the next station. The candidate cannot stay and observe other candidates test, this can increase testing anxiety.
15. Prepare equipment and material for the next candidate. Candidates are never to handle their own skills sheets. Skills evaluators are responsible for securing skill sheets at all times – before, during, and after testing, until returned to the skills coordinator.
16. After all skill sheets have been completed at your station, review for skill sheets for accuracy and give to the skill coordinator. The skills coordinator will perform a final check on all skill sheets for completion prior to turning into the program director.

Important: Please note that once skill sheets have been turned in to the program director, any lost or incomplete sheets may be considered a candidates failure. It is up to the program director to determine if the skill sheets will be accepted.

Retesting Process:

1. Candidates are notified after completing the skill of the item(s) he/she failed and be given adequate opportunity to practice and/or be remediated before they take a retest.
2. The candidate will be able to retest the failed skill one time on the initial examination date. All testing must be completed within twelve (12) months from the start of the course or date of the challenge.
3. The instructor of content being tested must not be the evaluator for the candidate's retest.
4. The retest evaluator is to complete the retest column on the original skill sheet and sign the form. The retest must be performed in its entirety, not just the portion failed previously. If the candidate fails the practical or written examination 3 times, they must repeat the course.

Team Skills

Team skills must be evaluated on an individual basis. For example, if one candidate fails his/her part of the team skills, then only that person fails that skill set, not the whole team. Candidates are retested performing the same role as the initial exam.

Interrupted Skills

When or if skills are interrupted, due to circumstances beyond the candidate's control, the candidate is allowed to return to the skills station and redo the initial skill from the beginning. The initial evaluator is allowed to do evaluate the candidate again, as this is considered his/her initial examination. The evaluator cannot tell the candidate which areas he/she did not perform correctly, as that can only happen when the candidate completes the skill in its entirety.

The candidate is also allowed a retest opportunity if he/she fails this skill. The retest is to be performed in accordance with the retest procedures

Coaching

The evaluator is not to coach the candidate in any way. Examples of coaching:

- Giving candidates any instructions that are not specified on the skill sheets instructions;
- Prompting the candidate during the skills evaluation, such as "Anything else?" or "Are you sure you are finished?"
- Non-verbal communication such as looking at your watch, using body language to show the candidate what they are missing or using your eyes to point out areas missed.
- Answering questions after the evaluation has begun, such as the candidates stating they forgot the instructions and want you to reread them.
- If the candidate ask "How much time is left" you *can* give him/her this information.

To play it safe when it comes to coaching, after the candidate confirms he/she understands the instructions, the evaluator is to say nothing until the candidates states he/she is complete, unless the evaluator feels there is a safety hazard.