

Regulatory requirements for testing leading to EMS provider certification in Pennsylvania

To become a certified Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider in Pennsylvania, all candidates must pass both a written cognitive exam and a hands-on practical skills test. For most provider levels, this process is based on the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) exams. All applicants must complete a state-approved educational program, hold a current CPR certification, and pass these examinations.

General testing requirements

- **Two-part examination:** Certification requires passing a written (cognitive) exam and a practical (psychomotor) skills exam.
- **Written cognitive exam:** Most candidates take the NREMT cognitive exam, which is a computer-adaptive test administered at a Pearson test center.
- **Practical skills exam:** These hands-on tests are scheduled and administered by Pennsylvania's regional EMS councils.
- **Attempt limits and remediation:** You must attempt the certification exams within one year of completing your training program and finish all attempts within two years. If you fail an exam three times, you must complete a remedial course before attempting it again.

Testing for different provider levels

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)

- **Written exam:** The NREMT cognitive exam is required. A candidate who is between 16 and 18 years old may take a state-approved assessment exam instead, but this will not result in national certification.
- **Practical exam:** Candidates must pass a state-prescribed practical test of EMT skills.
- **Prerequisites:** You must be at least 16 years old and have a current CPR certification.

Paramedic

- **Written exam:** Candidates must pass the NREMT Paramedic exam.
- **Practical exam:** Candidate's ability to show successful completion of meeting the Paramedic SMC set forth by the Department and the educational institute.
- **Prerequisites:** You must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and hold a current Pennsylvania EMT or AEMT certification.

Background checks and additional requirements for both programs:

Beyond passing the exams, the certification process includes administrative requirements managed through Pennsylvania's online EMS Registry system.

- **Criminal history:** All applicants must disclose any misdemeanor, felony, or other criminal convictions that are not summary offenses.
- **Background clearances:** Before participating in clinical rotations, you must obtain satisfactory results from a Pennsylvania State Police criminal history check, a Child Abuse History Certification, and an FBI criminal history background check.
- **Online application:** You must complete an electronic application for certification through the PA EMS Registry system. The application must be completed in a single sitting.