



California State Fire Training

PO Box 944246, Sacramento, CA 94244-2460
Bus (916) 445-8444

1131 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811



National Recognition and Certification Examination

Frequently Asked Questions

PURPOSE and SCOPE: This document is intended to memorialize, in one location questions which have been posed to State Fire Training (SFT) regarding national recognition and implementation of the Fire Fighter I certification examination process and SFT's response. This document will be updated on a periodic basis as new questions are addressed. The information in this document is considered germane to administrators of an Accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) or Accredited Local Academy (ALA). Questions or comments on this document and the information it contains should be directed to Ken Wagner, Fire Service Training Specialist III, ken-wagner@comcast.net, (916) 425-2995.

1. Under the new curriculum, we have been told students will no longer receive a CSTI Hazmat FRO certificate. If this is correct, will they receive an FSTEP FRO cert instead? If so, does that mean we will need SFT FRO registered instructors to deliver this portion? If so, can CSTI FRO Instructors be "Grandfathered" in? Lastly, will there be a fee attached to this?

Response: *An ARTP/ALA can still issue certificates from CSTI and/or SFT for FRO to indicate the students have completed this training. If an academy wants to issue an FSTEP cert then they will need an instructor registered by SFT. If they are already a CSTI instructor they just need to send in an instructor application for FRO along with supporting information and they will become an SFT instructor also. What the student will receive at the end of the Fire Fighter I certification process is a Certification at the level of First Responder Operational noted on their Fire Fighter I certificate.*

2. Currently SFT has indicated to be an approved Skills Evaluator for the cert. testing, staff will need to have completed Instructor IA & IB. Because the new *Fire Instructor I* course is designed to "teach and deliver instruction from a prepared lesson plan utilizing instructional aids and evaluation instruments", would you accept this course in lieu of Instructor IA & B?

Response: *SFT is already contemplating implementation of the new Instructor curriculum as it relates to Fire Fighter Instructors. SFT is contemplating the change to be either completion of the Instructor I course, or, possibly to require Instructor I certification.*

3. When selecting the Random skills for the ARTP/ALA, would it be possible to avoid simultaneously selecting *Perform Vertical Ventilation on a Structure (5-12.1)* and *Cover Building Openings (5-13.5)*? Most of us will use our Roof Vent Props to demonstrate *both* skills and selecting the two during a cert test will create an enormous logistical challenge.

Response: *Absolutely. SFT will make this a business practice.*



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4. In the evaluator workshop in May 2014, it was identified that Registered Skills Evaluators must have both an *Instructor Code of Ethics/Conduct* as well as an *Evaluator Code of Conduct* on file with SFT. Is it possible to include all the required elements on one form to avoid duplication of efforts?

Response: *SFT will maintain these as two separate forms as they are related to separate courses and applications for registration. Registered instructors must complete the Instructor/Code of Ethics/Conduct after attending the Ethics in the Classroom course. Only Registered Lead Evaluators and Skills Evaluators need to complete both forms. Having two forms will also work more efficiently within the SFT administrative process.*

5. Can ARTPs/ALAs have the flexibility to use reasonable alternatives for instructional aids during the certification testing that meet its intent. *As you are probably aware, many fire academies may not have the specific instructional aids (as on page 4 in the FFI Course Plan), but do have equivalents (ie Bullex fire extinguisher trainer instead of flammable liquids pan). Having the latitude to use these equivalencies will be critical to allowing many institutions to conduct the cert testing.*

Response: *Yes, the ability to utilize equivalent examination aids will be allowed. We have discussed this with both IFSAC and Pro Board as we have prepared for accreditation. Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTP) or Accredited Local Academies (ALA) will need to discuss alternatives with State Fire Training (SFT) in advance. This would apply to both certification examinations and delivery of the Fire Fighter I (2013) curriculum.*

6. ARTPs/ALAs need the flexibility to reject certain random skills that pose a logistical challenge or economic hardship. *Some skills if selected could make it very difficult to budget or be prohibited to implement. Examples included Deploy and Operate a Master Stream (Skill 7-1.13) since many agencies prohibit flowing water due to the drought. Or Select and Operate a Portable Fire Extinguisher (Skill 5-3.1) which would result in approx..\$900 in additional costs to refill the extinguishers.*

Response: *Yes, SFT may replace a randomly selected skill after evaluating concerns presented by and ARTP or ALA. However, an ARTP or ALA will not be allowed to simply “reject” a randomly selected skill. A sound rationale for requesting an alternative skill will be required.*

7. ARTPs and ALAs would like the flexibility to conduct the skills testing for Wildland & Haz-Mat separate from the Structural. Many academies have Cal Fire conduct their Wildland units which they schedule around their training schedule and fire season. Because we have no control over the two and in some cases it will be impossible to have staff available to return for testing at a later date, it only makes sense to allow this to occur at the termination of that unit.



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Response: Yes, ARTPs and ALAs will be allowed to conduct separate skills examinations for Fire Fighter I, Wildland Fire Fighter I and Haz Mat FRO as an alternate to conducting all of the skills exams at one time. The ARTP or ALA will be required to request separate dates via the Fire Fighter I Certification Examination Request Form. It is important to note that if an ARTP or ALA requests this option, a separate \$10.00 Student Examination Registration Fee will be assessed for each skills examination. SFT has attempted to keep fees associated with this program as low as possible. Adding additional examination dates will increase staff workload for scheduling, processing and conducting site audits as required by IFSAC and Pro Board. A separate fee for the written examination will not be assessed as long as it is submitted with and conducted in conjunction with the last skills exam.

8. Can SFT consider a reduction in the number of skills tested at the end of an academy? Due to the enormous increase in labor costs (i.e. 500% for Santa Rosa), the group strongly felt the 21 skills would create a significant economic hardship and since all shared that their students would need to be successfully demonstrated them at other times in the academy, it also created some redundancy. The consensus among the membership was ten was a manageable figure but we are willing to discuss this number.

Response: We can reduce the number of random skills from a total count of eleven (11) to a total count of seven (7). This reduction will still keep our skills examination process in line with other IFSAC/Pro Board accredited states. The detail for each examination area is:

Fire Fighter I: from five (5) to three (3) random skills

Wildland Fire Fighter I: from four (4) to (2) random skills

Haz Mat FRO: no reduction, random skills will remain at two (2)

Required skills will remain at ten (10). The detail for each examination area is:

Fire Fighter I: five (5)

Wildland Fire Fighter I: four (4)

Haz Mat FRO: one (1)

The new total number of skill tests would be seventeen (17), ten (10) required and seven (7) random.

In regard to increased costs, as a special fund program SFT understands how the cost associated with new programs impacts operational costs and the fees end users are required to pay. In the same way SFT cannot implement this new certification examination project without new fees, SFT does not expect ARTPs to implement certification examinations without incurring additional costs and passing those costs on the candidates. The likelihood of additional fees is being discussed during presentations to stakeholder groups at all levels.



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9. Will students who complete a 2001 academy but fail to complete the experience component before December 31, 2017 need to complete the certification testing in order to obtain their FFI.

Response: Yes, as stated in the Fire Fighter I Implementation Plan candidates will need to complete their occupational experience and submit their Scantron signed by the Fire Chief (or designee) prior to December 31, 2017. If they do not complete the requirements and apply prior to December 31, 2017 they will need to successfully complete both the written and skills examinations and complete the task book requirements set forth for the 2013 curriculum.

10. We understand that students that graduate under the 2013 curriculum will have no time limit attached to the completion of their task books.

Response: Correct. SFT will be reviewing curriculum in alignment with the five (5) year cycle established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for professional qualification standards. If the curriculum is updated and requires changes in the SFT Fire Fighter I Task Book, candidates with open task books will be required to complete the new, additional JPRs.

11. We understand that the number of questions in the written test cannot be reduced due to a question being required for each of the CTS's in the applicable NFPA standard.

Response: SFT has taken this concern into account. Consequently, the Fire Fighter I questions have been reduced from 165 to 100. Wildland Fire Fighter I will remain at 30 and Haz Mat FRO will remain at 30. This change results in a total of 160 questions.

12. The certification testing process IS NOT a mandatory component of the academy (in other words we can run an academy without the testing process and issue a completion certificate. However, the students will not get IFSAC, SFT or Pro-Board certs).

Response: This test is mandatory for all ARTPs and ALAs to administer and for California certification, but this test does not have to be incorporated into the Fire Fighter I course. It may be given as a standalone test outside the academy. ARTPs and ALAs also must notify candidates that successful completion of a certification examination is required, along with making the certification examination available to candidates who have completed Fire Fighter I training via alternative delivery methods. Further, during our Evaluator Briefing conducted at Oxnard City College on September 24, 2014 SFT agreed that ARTP certification examination dates for their academies would not be published on the SFT web site. As part of this discussion/agreement, ARTPs agreed that they would offer a selection of examination dates throughout the year that would be published by SFT.

13. If a student fails a single skill twice, they need to retake the entire certification testing process again after a "sit-out" period and obtaining a re-take letter from SFT. However, it has also been



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suggested that when we submit our request for the Skills Test, we can submit a “re-test” request to avoid having the students follow this “sit-out” period.

Response: Yes, an ARTP or ALA may submit a Fire Fighter I Certification Examination Request Form requesting authorization for re-take dates concurrently with their “original” Fire Fighter I Certification Examination Request Form. Furthermore, As SFT has agreed to allow separate skills exams for Fire Fighter I, Wildland Fire Fighter I and Haz Mat FRO, the candidate will only need to re-take that section of the skills examination wherein they previously failed a skill station after two attempts.

14. Can an ARTP/ALA implement the certification examinations if our staff has not attended the Lead Evaluator of Skills Evaluator training (potentially because it has not been offered)?

Response: The two, one day programs that SFT delivered, one in Roseville and one in Oxnard were intended to be briefings for the CFTDA membership and ALA administrators. The curriculum utilized for these briefings was based on our proposed procedures for delivery of certification examinations. Our proposed procedures need to be reviewed and approved by both IFSAC and Pro Board. This will not occur until we make our formal application for accreditation later in 2015. We did not intend for these briefings to circumvent the need for formal Lead Evaluator/Skills Evaluator training that will be required after we gain accreditation.

SFT encourages all ARTPs & ALAs to begin utilizing the 2013 Fire Fighter I curriculum, skill sheets and concepts discussed during the aforementioned briefings. However, we anticipate that IFSAC and Pro Board will only allow us to affix their seals and/or logos on SFT issued certificates after we achieve accreditation.

15. A follow-up would be when do you plan to offer training for these positions?

Response: Assuming we achieve accreditation from IFSAC and Pro Board during calendar year 2015, SFT plans on delivering the formal Lead Evaluator/Skills Evaluator training on a statewide basis during calendar year 2016. As previously discussed, SFT anticipates delivering this training in conjunction with the required Ethical Leadership in the Classroom course.

16. If ARTPs/ALAs are delivering the new certification examinations (say in fall 2015), will our students be able to receive IFSAC & Pro Board certifications?

Response: No. Although SFT encourages all ARTPs & ALAs to begin utilizing the 2013 Fire Fighter I curriculum, skill sheets and concepts discussed during the aforementioned briefings, we



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anticipate that IFSAC and Pro Board will only allow us to issue their certifications based on certification examinations delivered after we achieve accreditation.

17. For some of the mandatory skills tests, elaborate instructional props that require significant investment will be required (ie a burn room with a gas prop to conduct skills 5-10.1 structure fire attack). Because these may take a while to fund/purchase, will SFT be flexible in terms of how we administer skills like these until these can be acquired?

Response: *Our response to this question must go beyond the delivery of certification examinations. The Fire Fighter I (2013) Certification Training Standard, Section 3-11: Conducting Structural Fire Fighting Operations, Job Performance Requirements states, in part, “attack an interior structure fire.” Furthermore, the Fire Fighter I (2013) Course Plan, Page 5, Simulation equipment/materials requires training providers to have access to a burn room meeting the requirements of NFPA 1403, Standard on Live Fire Training. And, instructional Topic 5-10: Structural Fire Fighting Operations references Fire Control 3A and 3B curriculum for guidance in conducting live fire activities. Therefore, training providers must have access to an appropriate burn room in order to fully deliver the Fire Fighter I (2013) curriculum.*

As ARTPs and ALAs must have access to an appropriate burn room to deliver Fire Fighter I training, it is assumed that they will have access to an appropriate burn room when conducting certification examination skills testing. SFT has always allowed ARTPs and ALAs who do not have on-site live fire facilities to provide these resources via agreement with other agencies that maintain such props.

This question has prompted additional discussion with several ARTPs and ALAs regarding the availability of burn rooms and the logistics of conducting live fire activities during skills testing. SFT is, therefore, planning to modify the requirements of Skill Sheet 5-10-1 as follows:

Exception:

If the candidate has successfully completed a State Fire Training approved Fire Control 3A or 3B course, participated in all aspects of live fire training associated with the course and received and FSTEP Certificate, required Skill Sheet 5-10-1 may be administered without utilizing a “live fire.” In lieu of “live fire,” the candidate shall be required to discharge water on a simulated fire within the “burn room.”

SFT must obtain approval from IFSAC and Pro Board before implementing this exception. SFT believes this is feasible under the IFSAC and pro Board definition of “testing in context.”

18. The proposed procedures for the Fire Fighter I certification examination process require ARTPs and ALAs to submit a Certification Examination Request form to SFT at least 6 weeks prior to scheduled examination dates. Do ARTP's & ALA's need to submit this request when they begin delivery of the Fire Fighter I 2013 curriculum or after SFT is accredited by IFSAC & Pro-Board?



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Response: *ARTPs and ALAs are NOT required to submit a Certification Examination Request form to SFT for Fire Fighter I (2013) testing at this time. This form will be required after SFT is accredited by IFSAC and Pro Board and the certification examination process is rolled out statewide. This roll out should occur during calendar year 2016. Therefore, SFT anticipates that ARTPs and ALAs will begin utilizing the Certification Examination Request form beginning the 2016 fall semester. Copies of this and all other forms associated with the certification examination process will be provided and discussed during the formal Lead Evaluator/Skills Evaluator Training Course which will be delivered statewide after SFT received IFSAC and Pro Board accreditation.*

19. SFT has directed lead evaluators to report candidate skills examination results on the SFT course completion Scantron. Further, SFT has established a policy that allows a candidate to re-take only the module they have failed. For example, a candidate may pass the Fire Fighter I skills, but fail Haz Mat FRO and Wildland Fire Fighter I. How can this result be reported on one Scantron?

Response: *This type of result cannot successfully be reported on a single Scantron. The use of the Scantron to report candidate skills examination results was established prior to discussions which resulted in the policy allowing skills examinations to be delivered modularly. If a candidate fails any of the three skills examination modules (Fire Fighter I, Haz Mat FRO, Wildland Fire Fighter I), the results need to be reported in a manner that will allow SFT to address any resulting retake requests. To facilitate this, the following procedures are to be followed:*

1. *If a candidate successfully passes all three skills modules, a complete, single Scantron with the "+" box properly shaded shall be submitted to SFT.*

~OR~

2. *If a candidate fails one or more of the three modules, a complete, single Scantron with the "-" box properly shaded shall be submitted to SFT. In addition to the Scantron, a completed Fire Fighter I Skills Testing Summary for the candidate shall also be submitted to SFT. This submittal will allow SFT to determine which modules the candidate passed and/or failed.*

In the event an ARTP/ALA has scheduled a retake exam to occur prior to the time the materials from the initial exam are submitted to SFT, and the ARTP/ALA is going to electronically submit a Certification Examination Retake Application on behalf of a candidate, a completed Fire Fighter I Skills Testing Summary for the candidate shall be included with the application.

20. When an ARTP/ALA has decided to conduct the skills examinations in a modular format, is it required that the written examination also be delivered in a modular format? For example, if we conduct the Haz Mat skills examination on specific day, must we conduct the Haz Mat written examination on that same day?

Response: *Although the decision was made to allow the skills examination to be delivered in a modular format (see question #7 above), no provision has been made to allow the written examination to be delivered in a modular format. The procedures require that the comprehensive written examination be conducted in one sitting.*



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21. I am with an ARTP and we are currently implementing the Fire Fighter I (2013) certification examination process for our academy students. I have heard discussion that we will be expected to offer the certification examination for outside candidates, meaning individuals that may have received their Fire Fighter I and II training elsewhere. What is the expectation of SFT in this regard?

Response: *As you know, the only authorized delivery points for the certification examinations are ARTPs and ALAs. Since ALAs are restricted by their accreditation to serve only their employees, ARTPs will be expected to provide examination venues for all other candidates. Therefore, each ARTP must plan on making both the written and skills examination available through an open enrollment process. The number and frequency of these open exams is not specified, but each ARTP should be mindful of the needs of the fire service community they serve. ARTPs should make a decision on these open deliveries after careful consideration of the local market needs and consultation with their fire technology advisory committee. Making these examinations available to open enrollment candidates is an expectation that will be included in the ARTP accreditation requirements.*

In addition to making examinations available to open enrollment candidates, ARTPs are also expected to work cooperatively with the fire agencies within their service area to meet their needs for examinations. It is important for ARTPs to engage in outreach efforts to educate fire agencies on this new examination requirement and discuss how their needs can be met in relation to examination delivery. Please refer to the SFT Procedures Manual, Accredited Regional Training Program, Section 4.07 (b) which states "Ensure SFT courses are readily available and offered according to the needs of the analysis for the area served."

22. As students in our Fire Fighter I Academy prepare to move on to complete the experience component of their training, I have shared with hiring fire agencies the specific skills in the new task book that must be completed in order for these candidates to receive their Fire Fighter I Certification. Some of these agencies have reported that there remain some fire chiefs who believe they still retain the authority to sign off on a candidate's task book even if all of the skills have never actually been performed by the candidate. This raises the question, "Are Fire Fighter I candidates required to complete all of the skills identified in their task book in order to receive their Fire Fighter I Certification?"

It has also been suggested that the skills in the task book can be signed off during the academy. This runs contrary to my understanding of the intent of the task book, which is to reinforce the skills the students acquired during their Fire Fighter I training. This raises the question, "Can the skills in the task book be signed off by academy staff as the students complete the skill in the academy setting?"

Response: *The directions in set forth in the Fire Fighter I Task Book are very clear in this regard. The instructions to the candidate state: Complete each task in the Job Performance Requirements segment and ensure that an evaluator signs and dates each one to verify completion. Also ensure that every evaluator is listed on the Signature Verification page. Furthermore, the candidate's fire chief is also responsible to insure that this occurs. The position of SFT is that the candidate must successfully demonstrate proficiency in each of the skills listed in the task book.*



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SFT has taken the position that the skills listed in the task book may, in fact be signed off during academy training. Additionally, SFT has stated that ARTPs should consult with their fire technology advisory committee and local fire agencies to determine how the fire service community would like them to proceed in this regard. If sections of the task book are signed off during the academy, there is nothing stated that would prohibit a fire chief from requiring the candidate to perform a skill again and have that performance documented by a second signature in the task book.

23. Among the skills tests performed, some are more involved and require significant time (I.E. Technical De-Con 9-3.3). Providing we have the resources, is there anything that would prohibit us from running two Skills stations concurrently, testing the same skill to avoid a “bottleneck” in the test process?

Response: *This is an acceptable practice. In fact, it is acceptable to set up and administer the same skill at more than two stations if resources are available and examination security can be maintained.*

24. Under section 9.7 of the SFT Certification Exam Procedures, it states that Fire Fighter I test candidates must be “...staged in an area in which active skills evaluation may not be viewed.” While not specifically mentioned, this has been interpreted to mean that candidates will be escorted from the Staging Area to each Skills Test Station by an employee of the ARTP or ALA to avoid them from witnessing these activities while in transit. During our test, we found this to be a very labor intensive process, requiring up to three escorts. *Question:* If each Test Station is located in an area that cannot be seen from other Stations, and continual communication is maintained between the Staging area and the Test Stations (I.E. Radio), can the “Escort” requirement be waived?

Response: *The key in implementing procedure 9.7 is maintaining examination security and insuring that:*

- *one candidate cannot observe another candidate’s performance at a skill station and,*
- *candidates cannot discuss amongst themselves how to perform the skill, and*
- *candidates do not have access to reference materials of any kind*

During evaluator training we discuss escorting the candidates between staging and skill stations. Although this is the most secure method, an ARTP or ALA may implement an alternate method which allows them to adequately monitor candidates providing it meets intent of procedure 9.7 is met by some other means. For example, an instance where the staging area manager can, from the staging area observe the candidate while he/she is in transit between staging and the skill station, and back again.

25. We are looking to update our website regarding our Fire Academy and we were wondering if we are allowed to say we are now IFSAC and Pro Board accredited via the California State Fire Marshal and show the two agencies' logos?



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Response: *Technically, ARTPs and ALAs are not accredited by IFSAC or Pro Board. The state accreditation is held by CAL FIRE, Office of State Fire Marshal, State Fire Training. However, we see the validity in your request and have prepared the graphic below which can be used in your program advertisement and on your website. This graphic has also been approved by IFSAC and Pro Board. The content of this graphic may not be modified. Also, all three logos shall be hyperlinked to the respective organization's website.*



(Agency Name) is an accredited Regional Training Program (ARTP) as designated by the Office of the California State Fire Marshal (CSFM). As an ARTP, (Agency Name) is authorized to deliver a CSFM Accredited Fire Fighter I Academy and a full suite of CSFM courses leading advanced levels of certification. In addition, (Agency Name) is authorized by the CSFM to deliver Fire Fighter I certification examinations in support of CSFM's accreditation by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board).