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Tennessee Firefighting Commission Receives Accreditation Commission Gains Valuable Accreditation

NASHVILLE -The Tennessee Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education Commission (TFFC) recently achieved accreditation through the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (ProBoard), at their quarterly board meeting Oct. 5, 2015.

Entities achieving accreditation through ProBoard are recognized as having met the rigors of review by an independent organization. This third-party independent review assures Tennessee's firefighters and their governing bodies that the commission meets national standards. In addition, this accreditation also ensures uniformity of qualifications, which allows students tested at the TFFC more mobility to or from ProBoard states.

"I am proud to congratulate our commission for achieving this important milestone," said Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak. "We are committed to raising the standards for firefighting personnel by promoting and encouraging the skills and knowledge necessary to save lives, property and promote firefighter safety."

The commission, which is comprised of nine members, will be publicly recognized in January by the ProBoard at its annual meeting in Orlando, Fla. This accreditation provides further acknowledgement of the quality of testing to the National Fire Protection Association Standards (NFPA) and the leadership being provided to the fire service by the Commission.

The ProBoard accreditation is effective October 5, 2015. Additionally, the commission has been accredited through the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) since 2006.

Questions about the accreditation? These FAQs may help:

The TFFC is accredited to which ProBoard levels? The TFFC is initially accredited to the following levels: Hazardous Materials Awareness, Operations, Technician, Firefighter I and II, Fire Officer I, II, III, and IV, Fire and Life Safety Educator I, and II, Fire Instructor I and II, Fire Investigator, Fire Inspector I.

What special testing is required for ProBoard? Accredited entities, such as the TFFC are required to have the ability to test the entire NFPA Professional Qualification Standard for the subject area. For written and practical skills, the TFFC will use the same testing elements currently used for IFSAC. ProBoard and IFSAC do not require separate testing.

I am certified through IFSAC. What do I need to do to achieve ProBoard certifications?

If a Tennessee firefighter was previously certified through IFSAC before October 5, 2015, they will need to retest (practical and written) for the specific level. Unfortunately, the two accrediting groups do not allow transfer from one to the other. If a firefighter is certified from one, they can move forward in the certification process (i.e. student has an IFSAC certification for Fire Officer I, he can enroll and become certified as a Fire Officer II through IFSAC and ProBoard).

If a firefighter moves from another state and is certified through ProBoard, how does he transfer his certifications into Tennessee? ProBoard accreditation allows the TFFC to accept ProBoard certifications for reciprocity, as long as the TFFC has that specific level listed in our rules. Reciprocity in Tennessee is the recognizing of certification, without any required testing, to those individuals who have previously been certified at an specific level by a ProBoard or IFSAC accredited entity. The candidate must complete an Application for Reciprocity form and submit copies of ProBoard or IFSAC certificates.

What is the advantage of having an accredited certificate? If, for instance, you move to another state that participates in ProBoard or IFSAC, that state may accept your accredited certificate as proof of training to the level stated on the certificate. Each jurisdiction establishes its own certification requirements. Other states may or may not recognize TFFC certification as proof of training, but states that participate in ProBoard or IFSAC are required to establish a reciprocity process for accredited certificate holders. Some private fire protection providers are requiring their employees to hold accredited certificate in various disciplines, particularly those organizations contracting to provide services at federal facilities.

When I get my IFSAC certificate, will I also receive a ProBoard Certificate? Once a student successfully completes testing, for areas where we are ProBoard accredited, the TFFC will issue an IFSAC certificate. The student will also receive an Application for Registration and Certification for ProBoard. TFFC staff will complete the "Certifying Entity Confirmation" section. The student must complete the applicant information section and submit it, along with a \$15 processing fee, to ProBoard. ProBoard will register the candidate in the ProBoard National Registry and mail a certificate to the applicant.

What are the benefits of being dually accredited? It allows for increased portability between

jurisdictions (local, state, federal, and international). Further, states are beginning to go to dual accreditation, but there still exist States that are ProBoard or IFSAC-accredited only. Thus, dual accreditation allows Tennessee to recognize a firefighter's training from outside the state and for Tennessee firefighter's to have their training recognized outside the state as well. In addition, many career, combination, and volunteer Departments will not have to retrain and test Firefighters. Many jurisdictions do not have the luxury to have recruit academies and will only hire personnel with accredited certification. For example, many airports, private contractors and the Department of Defense will not hire personnel that do not already have the accredited certifications, as well as many smaller cities and towns. Also, in large scale disasters, personnel with accredited certifications will be in national or state level databases which can be quickly accessed for credentialing.

If you have specific questions not addressed, contact your coordinator or staff at (931) 294-4140.

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