

Computer testing debuts January

By Kelly Harrell

As of January 1, 2007, the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) takes the leap into computerized testing, and Texas will be right there at the computer terminal. As of that date, all testing will be scheduled through Pearson VUE and administered on a computer at one of the 19 testing center sites in Texas. More sites may be coming online in the future. Watch our website and *Texas EMS Magazine* for more information about computer testing and Pearson VUE.

What will be the process for testing come January?

Once you have passed the course, your coordinator will notify NREMT of your course completion. You apply to NREMT online; you can either pay by credit card online or by mail with a check. NREMT verifies that you are eligible to test based on the information that your coordinator sends them. You will then receive a confirmation and instructions on how to schedule a test, either online or by calling a toll-free number, at a Pearson VUE testing center. After you take the exam, the scored results will be sent to NREMT, which will post the scores on its website in about 24 hours. Those scores also will be sent to your educational program and to DSHS.

What is computer-adaptive testing (CAT)?

According to testing experts, CAT is a method of question selection that allows for the most efficient testing of a candidate's knowledge in the shortest amount of time. For instance, if a candidate



correctly answers a question, the computer will then choose a slightly more difficult question. This will continue until the candidate misses a question. The computer then asks an easier question. The reverse is true for a candidate with less ability. If a candidate continues to answer incorrectly, the questions become easier. The theory of CAT is that it will take fewer questions, answered incorrectly or correctly, to determine whether the candidate possesses the required knowledge. The end result is that candidates at the top end and low end of knowledge will have shorter tests. For those in the middle, it might take a bit longer for the computer to determine whether the candidate has the knowledge to pass. As you might have guessed, there are no grades in CAT, simply a pass/fail notation.

NREMT reports that most people will need to answer a minimum of about 60 questions to determine a pass/fail rate; in other words, after about 60 questions, the

computer usually can determine those people who will pass and those who won't pass on this round. Those who score in the mid-range will have to continue answering questions until competency is established – or not.

Will all testing be CAT?

The first responder (ECA), EMT and paramedic tests will use computer-adaptive testing. However, due to the differences in the 1985 and 1999 curriculums, the Texas EMT-I exam will be a linear computer test — a mirror image of the so-called “linear” pencil-and-paper test.

Is the computer test easier – or harder?

The difficulty of the exam will not change, but the exam will be a more precise evaluation of each candidate's competency and understanding. The good news is that during beta testing of the CAT, scores improved. EMTs passed at a 65 percent rate with the pencil-and-paper test; it jumped to 82 percent with CAT. And paramedics went from a 64 percent pass rate with the paper test to a 69 percent pass rate.

Can I skip questions and go back later?

No.

Is there a time limit for the exam?

There is an overall time limit for each exam, just like for the pencil-and-paper versions. There is no time limit for individual questions.

I take a break in the middle of the exam?

Yes, but there are extensive security measures in place to verify a candidate's identity upon return from the break. The testing clock does not stop for breaks; in other words, whatever time you use on a break will not be added to your test time.

Can we test as a group?

Yes, it is possible to schedule a session to test a group of students at a time depending on the space

available at testing center. However, students may prefer testing at their own convenience.

Is the practical exam changing?

The skills testing will remain the same. Skills testing will remain with the educational programs or, for EMT-Is and paramedics, through Advanced Level National Registry representatives.

Where are the Texas testing sites for Pearson VUE?

Pearson VUE will offer the EMS exams at 14 professional centers and five testing centers. In addition, NREMT is looking at putting another testing center in Southwest Texas between San Antonio and El Paso.

Pearson VUE Professional Centers (PPC)

500 Chestnut, Suite 856
Abilene 79602



Source: NREMT

There will be 19 Pearson VUE sites in Texas; at least one more could come online in the next few months.

Red dots: Confirmed locations for testing centers

Blue dots: City confirmed; location within city pending

Green dot: Possible future testing center

1616 S. Kentucky, Suite C305
Amarillo 79102

301 Congress Ave., Suite 565
Austin 78701

6800 W. Loop South, Suite 405
Bellaire 77401

4646 Corona Drive, Suite 175
Corpus Christi 78411

9101 LBJ Freeway, Suite 480
Dallas 75243

4445 N. Mesa St., Suite 119
El Paso 79902

8876 Gulf Freeway, Suite 220
Houston 77017

500 Grapevine Highway, Suite 401
Hurst 76054

1500 Broadway, Suite 1113
Lubbock 49401

3300 N. A St., Building 4
Midland 79705

10000 San Pedro, Suite 175
San Antonio 78216

909 E. Southeast Loop 323, Suite 625
Tyler 75701

1105 Wooded Acres, Suite 406
Waco 76710

*Pearson VUE Authorized Centers
(Exact location to be determined)*

Beaumont
Brownwood
Laredo
McAllen
Wichita Falls

And if you are closer to a testing center in another state, you can take the test there. The map on page 31 shows the testing sites in

Texas and surrounding states. Most Pearson VUE testing sites are open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Some are open Saturday, and some will even open on Sundays during peak testing periods. Other groups who use Pearson VUE include the American Board of Emergency Medicine; the National Council of State Boards of Nursing; the American Board of Internal Medicine; and the American Board of Surgery.

What are the fees?

These fees cover both the testing center fee and the NREMT registration fee. Texas certification and licensing fees are additional and paid directly to DSHS. Volunteers do not pay DSHS fees but are **not** exempt from NREMT/testing center fees.

- First responder, \$65
- EMT-Basic, \$70
- EMT-I, \$100
- Paramedic, \$110

What if I need to retest?

You would have to pay the above fees again for Pearson VUE and NREMT. If you have already applied for Texas initial certification or licensure and you fail, there will be no additional state application fees.

What about instructor and coordinator testing?

Instructors and coordinators need to contact DSHS field offices to set up testing.

So what are the advantages to computerized testing at Pearson VUE?

According to NREMT, there are

several advantages to computer testing:

- Rapid turnaround, with test results available in one day from Pearson VUE and provided to NREMT, the candidates and DSHS.
- Choice on exam sites, with 19 Pearson VUE testing sites in Texas. And candidates can take the test in any Pearson VUE testing center in the United States.
- Online and phone registration make it easy to schedule and pay for the exam.
- Individualized testing available through CAT allows for better assessment of knowledge, usually in a shorter time frame. And because each test is different, candidates are exposed to fewer questions, making for better test security.

Next issue: More information on CAT and Pearson VUE

Injury prevention basics posted

If you've always wanted a comprehensive overview of injury prevention, it's now as close as your computer. GETAC's Injury Prevention Committee has a series of injury prevention curriculum modules on the OEMS/TS website designed to teach you the basics of injury prevention. The 20 modules are formatted as PowerPoint presentations. Go to www.tdh.state.tx.us/hcqs/ems and click on Injury Prevention Curriculum under News/Features.