

OFC: Evaluation and Certification Guide

NFPA 1021

Professional Qualifications for Fire Officer

Revised 2021

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency

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Introduction

The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) offers a comprehensive evaluation and certification program for Saskatchewan emergency services. The program is designed to meet the needs of full-time, paid-on-call, and volunteer fire fighters, and emergency responders through uniform, objective and documented evaluation of their knowledge, skills and abilities. In this document, all references to fire fighters also includes other emergency services personnel who meet the prerequisites for certification.

In the certification process, our primary relationship is with individual fire fighters. Many fire departments and training groups provide essential support by sponsoring evaluation programs. It is still up to the individual seeking certification to complete the necessary application forms and other prerequisites listed in the appendices included with this document.

Saskatchewan follows National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards for the professional qualification of emergency responders. The SPSA is a member of International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC). Successful candidates receive certificates with the IFSAC seal. The SPSA offers certification to responders under the following NFPA Standards:

- 1072** Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Personnel Professional Qualifications
Awareness and Operations
(Appendix B)
- 1001** Fire Fighting Professional Qualifications
Levels I and II
(Appendix C)
- 1002** Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications
Apparatus Equipped with Fire Pump
Apparatus Equipped with Aerial Device
(Appendix D)
- 1021** Professional Qualifications for Fire Officer
Level I and II
(Appendix E)
- 1033** Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator
(Appendix G)
- 1041** Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications
Level I and II
(Appendix H)

Certification benefits everyone in the fire and emergency services community and involvement with the program gives much needed recognition to those fire fighters and others working to improve their skills and abilities.

A key goal is to meet the varying levels of demand for certification from volunteer, part-time and career fire departments. There is enough flexibility in the program to ensure testing and certification is conducted on a fair and equal basis in all regions of the province.

We encourage comments and suggestions from everyone who takes part in fire fighter evaluations.

If you have questions about fire service certification programs, contact the SPSA at:

500 – 1855 Victoria Avenue
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3T2
1-800-667-9660

The Evaluation and Certification Guide, Sponsors Guide and Evaluators Guide are available on-line. Visit our web site at saskpublicsafety.ca.

Terminology

There is a list of organization acronyms and terms used in this document on Page 13. We suggest you look through the terminology before continuing.

Evaluation and Certification Program Mission Statement

- Ensure continuing compliance with the requirements and regulations of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) by maintaining an active SPSA membership in the IFSAC Certificate Assembly.
- Evaluate and forecast the training and development needs of Saskatchewan's emergency services and ensure IFSAC accreditation is available in appropriate National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards as the need for certification arises.
- Offer a program of certification open to all eligible Saskatchewan participants that can be delivered on a local/regional basis and is structured to accommodate the needs of full-time, part-time and volunteer emergency personnel.
- Establish uniform minimum provisions for programs which will be eligible to receive certificates of provincial recognition of training.

Authority

The certification process is designed to be transparent. Individuals, agencies and The SPSA may not depart from the practices and policies detailed in the Evaluation and Certification Guide, the Sponsor's Guide and in the Evaluator's Guide. Changes to certification policies and procedures will be implemented only after they are made available to all interested parties and the public.

Using the Evaluation and Certification Guide

This guide provides detailed information about the system of certification in Saskatchewan. The attached appendices provide information on certification under a specific NFPA Standard and detail all requirements to gain certification.

Benefits of Certification

Certification is based on established National Fire Protection Association Standards. A fire fighter must gain important skills, knowledge and experience to be ready for certification testing. When they are successful, fire fighters know they have met the same professional requirements as fire service members across Saskatchewan, Canada and internationally. Fire departments know they have well trained and qualified members. Communities know their department is offering the best of fire protection services. The SPSA offers two types of recognition to fire fighters: Provincial Recognition of Training, and International Fire Service Accreditation Congress certification.

Provincial Recognition of Training

Certificates in recognition of training are available to all serving fire department members in Saskatchewan. The Commissioner issues provincial recognition certificates based on the recommendation of a qualified fire service instructor, training officer or Fire Chief. Detailed information may be found in Appendix A: Provincial Recognition of Training.

International Certification

The SPSA issues certificates as a member of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) to fire fighters who have proven their competency in meeting the requirements of NFPA Standards. Certificates bearing the IFSAC seal identify that an individual has attained a professional qualification.

IFSAC Certificates

Certificates are issued to individuals who successfully complete certification requirements and identify the name of the individual, the NFPA Standard and Level achieved and an IFSAC seal, with a unique number, affixed to the certificate. One certificate is issued per person upon successful completion of the certification requirements under an NFPA Standard.

Replacement certificates are not available. Original certificates that have been lost or damaged cannot be replaced. If a person's name is misspelled they may get a corrected certificate by returning the original certificate, within 30 days of issue, to our office.

If you have lost a certificate you can write to the SPSA identifying the NFPA Standard and the year the certificate was issued. The SPSA will provide a letter confirming the certification and the certificate number.

Recognition of Out-of-Province Certifications

Certificates issued by any IFSAC member organization are accepted in Saskatchewan. Other qualifications used as pre-requisites, first aid certificates for example, will be reviewed by the SPSA before being accepted or rejected.

NFPA Standards

Certification is based on NFPA Standards. Standards are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Each time a Standard changes, the testing and evaluation tools used by the SPSA must change as well. Changes in written and practical evaluation criteria may be made up to three years after a new edition of a Standard is released. Candidates should check the relevant appendix to confirm which edition of an NFPA Standard will be used for testing.

Normally, a fire fighter has to gain certification in an NFPA Standard only once. This means certification is valid in perpetuity. It also means that certification cannot lapse. However, because Standards sometimes change significantly, an individual may be required to upgrade their certification. For example, 1072 — Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Personnel Professional Qualifications has recently undergone substantial changes. Recertification may be required in order to meet the current prerequisites for NFPA 1001 — Fire Fighting Professional Qualification. Prerequisites for each level of certification are stated clearly in the requirements for that level.

The certification process does not allow for “grandfathering,” a means whereby certification is gained through past experience or training alone. Certification is only granted after successful completion of a full evaluation session. Detailed requirements are listed in the appendix for each Standard.

Evaluation and Testing

The practical and written testing done for certification is based exclusively on NFPA Standards. Candidates can prepare for testing in any way they choose: formal training courses, group learning sessions or individual study. Your skills and knowledge are measured against the Standard, not the training material or methods used.

Certification Programs

The SPSA conducts certification programs in strict compliance with procedures established by IFSAC. Programs conducted in Saskatchewan are open to all qualified fire fighters and emergency responders. Many certification sessions require participation by a number of candidates and are usually sponsored by fire departments, training groups or fire service associations. In accordance with IFSAC requirements, a representative from the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors may be in attendance observing any testing program conducted by the SPSA.

Certification is voluntary. There is no provincial requirement that fire fighters become certified. However, under Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation, fire fighters must be properly trained for the tasks they are expected to perform as a member of a department. Certification establishes a means to evaluate and recognize the proficiency of fire fighters and first responders, regardless of their department affiliation. Certification is open to full-time, paid-on-call or volunteer responders. Gaining Certification or Provincial Recognition of Training reliably demonstrates that individual fire fighters and their departments are in compliance with OHS regulations.

Scheduling Certification

Evaluation sessions are scheduled based on requests from fire departments, training groups and individuals. We try to accommodate all requests, based on the availability of SPSA staff and resources. Please contact us as soon as possible to schedule evaluation sessions.

Who qualifies to take part in a certification program?

Certification programs are open to all currently serving Saskatchewan fire fighters. Students in training institutions and programs recognized by the SPSA are also eligible. Other qualified emergency responders, organizations or associations that are approved by The SPSA, may also apply for certification. Every participant must be available to complete the entire evaluation process within the specified time frames. Each Standard has prerequisites and other requirements that must be completed by those wishing to participate (see the appropriate appendix for each Standard).

Preparing for Certification

Preparation is left to the individual. Some choose to participate based on their existing qualifications and experience. Others use self-study or formal training to prepare. Each Appendix contains a detailed set of Job Performance Requirements (JPRs) that list the requisite knowledge and skills that will be evaluated during written and practical testing.

Evaluation Process

Evaluations take three forms: review of required documentation, written evaluations and practical evaluation exercises. Candidates must submit all documentation listed in the appendix for each Standard. After review by SPSA, additional information may be required. When all documentation and prerequisites are in order, the candidate will be eligible to participate in testing and evaluation.

Certain NFPA Standards require the individual to maintain records or documents as part of the JPRs (i.e. training records for NFPA 1041 or investigation reports for NFPA 1033, etc.). Required records are part of the certification process and the participant is evaluated on these documents as well. In some cases, this documentation may be submitted after formal testing and evaluation is completed successfully.

The JPR sheets provided in the appendix for each Standard are a guide to identify, generally, the skills and knowledge an individual will be evaluated against during the certification process. The written and practical evaluations will be comprised of randomly selected questions/skill tests that represent the requisite knowledge and JPRs for the certification being tested. The JPR sheets are also a means for an individual to record their progress as they familiarize themselves with each performance requirement.

A reminder: candidates should become completely familiar with the appropriate NFPA Standard.

Prerequisites

NFPA Standard	Prerequisite Qualifications	Required Documentation
Hazardous Materials		
1072 Awareness		Completed Application Form Completed JPR form (Appendix B)
1072 Operations	Certification in 10 72 Awareness	
Fire Fighter		
1072 Awareness	Certification in 1072 Operations Level First Aid and CPR	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1072 — Operations Level Current First Aid/CPR (Level C) Certificate Completed JPR form (Appendix C)
1072 Operations	Certification NFPA 1001 — Level 1	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1001 — Level 1 Completed JPR form (Appendix C)
Driver/Operator		
1072 Awareness	Certification NFPA 1001 — Level 1 Valid Saskatchewan Driver's License	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1001 — Level 1 Must not be prohibited from driving Completed JPR form (Appendix D)
1072 Operations	Certification NFPA 1002 — Pump Valid Saskatchewan Driver's License	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1002 — Pump Must not be prohibited from driving Completed JPR form (Appendix D)
Instructor		
1072 Awareness		Completed Application Form Completed JPR form (Appendix H)
1072 Operations	Certification 1041 — Level 1	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1041 — Level 1 Completed JPR form (Appendix H)
Fire Officer		
1072 Awareness	Certification NFPA 1001 — Level 2 Certification NFPA 1041 — Level 1	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1001 — Level 2 Certificate NFPA 1041 Instructor — Level 1 Completed JPR form (Appendix E)
1072 Operations	Certification in 1072 Awareness	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1021 — Level 1 Completed JPR form (Appendix E)
Fire Officer		
1072 Awareness	Fire Fighting Knowledge	Completed Application Form Certificate NFPA 1001 – Level 1 or alternative* Completed JPR form (Appendix G)

*Provide written outline of training and experience in fire behaviour and suppression for approval by SPSA

Written Evaluations

Written evaluations may be held at a different time or location than practical evaluations. Normally the written tests must be successfully completed before proceeding with practical evaluation. Written evaluations consist of an instruction page, a question booklet, and an answer sheet. Individuals needing help because of language or literacy issues should identify themselves well in advance of the test date so alternative arrangements can be made.

For some Standards participants are allowed to use specified reference materials and/or calculators during a written test. Blank paper for making notes or doing calculations is permitted during written evaluations. These notes must be turned in with the completed test. No notes made by participants may be taken out of the testing room.

Written evaluations may consist of multiple choice, matching and/or true/false questions.

Question Examples:

Multiple Choice

1. The capital of Saskatchewan is:
 - A. Regina
 - B. Saskatoon
 - C. Winnipeg
 - D. Melfort

Matching

2. Match the following tools with their common use:
 - A. Axe 1. To force a car door
 - B. Pike pole 2. To ventilate a roof
 - C. Hydraulic rescue tool 3. To pull down a ceiling

True/False

3. Fire fighters must don their balaclava before their PPE coat.
True False

The number of test questions for each written evaluation is based on the number of Knowledge Requirements contained in the relevant NFPA Standard, based on this table:

Knowledge Requirements	Number of Questions
65 or fewer	50
66 or more	100

For example, NFPA 1041 — Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications has fewer than 65 Knowledge Requirements. The written evaluation for this Standard is 50 questions. 30 minutes is allowed for each 25 questions. For example, two hours is allowed for a 100-question exam. All written evaluations must be completed within the time provided. Participants are permitted two attempts to successfully complete written evaluations.

The *Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency* maintains a large bank of test questions for each Standard. A new set of written tests is generated for each evaluation session. No two versions of a test are the same. The test bank questions cover all Knowledge Requirements and shall have no less than one test question to support each component within the requisite knowledge for each NFPA Standard. Any given version of a test represents a fair evaluation of all components of cognitive knowledge in both the JPR and requisite knowledge areas.

Evaluation questions are based strictly on the applicable NFPA Standard and those documents specifically referenced in each appendix. All test questions are evaluated by SPSA staff before they are used for the first time. Participants who have concerns about the legitimacy of a question in an exam should inform the test proctor at the end of the test period. SPSA will review those questions and adjust test scores if the question is found to be flawed or invalid. SPSA also does statistical analysis of the results of all exams to identify and eliminate invalid questions.

Written evaluation materials remain under the strict control of SPSA at all times. Practice exams are not issued. Participants may not take exam materials and written notes from the testing room. SPSA staff may mark tests immediately after they are written or at a later date. When a local proctor is used, test papers are returned to SPSA for marking. If there is any indication that the security of testing materials has been compromised, participants may be required to re-write an exam.

Practical Evaluations

Safety First! Safety, before success, is essential. Each practical evaluation exercise is designed and executed with personnel safety as the highest priority. Each participant not only has the authority, but the duty and obligation, to ensure evaluations are carried out safely. Fire fighters will not be penalized for interrupting an evaluation exercise to deal with safety issues. When you have a safety concern or see a problem developing, tell the evaluation staff immediately.

Physical Preparedness

Practical evaluations for certification may be physically strenuous and potentially hazardous. You will be asked to sign a statement with your application form affirming you understand the demands that will be placed on you during testing, and that you are physically capable of taking part in all practical evaluation sessions.

Personal Protective Equipment

Everyone taking an active role in practical skills evaluation must use the correct personal protective clothing and equipment. All personal protective equipment, including Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) devices, must meet the requirements set out in Saskatchewan Occupational Health and Safety regulations and in accepted NFPA Standards. Evaluators may conduct an inspection of personal protective clothing and equipment prior to an evaluation exercise.

SCBA

Special attention will be paid to SCBA units. Units must have been tested and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Air bottles must have been inspected and hydro-tested (as applicable) according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Everyone participating in drills requiring the use of SCBA must be able to demonstrate they have been adequately fit-tested with the mask they are using during the evaluation.

Practical Evaluation Sessions

Practical evaluation exercises begin with a safety briefing and explanation of what tasks are to be completed during the exercise. All participants will be given opportunity to ask questions. Evaluators will announce clearly when the exercise is starting and when it finishes. At the conclusion of the exercise, each participant will have an opportunity for discussion with the evaluator.

All practical evaluations involving live fire scenarios are conducted in compliance with Occupational Health and Safety regulations. NFPA Standard 1403 — Live Fire Training Evolutions is used as a guide.

During practical skills testing each participant is evaluated individually. However, fire fighting depends on safe and effective teamwork. Participants may be evaluated on their performance as part of a team depending on the requirements of the appropriate NFPA Standard. With the exception of safety issues, participants are strongly cautioned to avoid interfering in any way with the performance of other participants during evaluations.

Participants will be permitted two attempts to complete an assigned task. Participants who do not complete a practical evaluation within the permitted time limits, or fail in their second attempt, must challenge the entire Standard again.

Written and Practical Passing Grades

A minimum passing score on written evaluations is 70%. All practical skills tested must be completed successfully. Participants will be told they have either passed or failed after written tests are marked and after completion of practical evaluations. It is up to the participant if they choose to inform others of their results. SPSA may release results of both written and practical evaluations to Fire Chiefs, employers or training organizations. Marks are not usually given out. An individual may obtain their marks through a written request sent to SPSA. The request must be received within 30 days of the end of the certification program.

Each participant has two opportunities to pass written and practical tests. Different versions of the written test and practical skills to be evaluated will be used whenever a participant is re-tested. Those who fail both attempts of either a written or practical evaluation must wait a minimum of 180 days before re-applying for certification. SPSA will offer the participant suggestions for additional study and/or training. A second application for certification at the same Standard will be reviewed and accepted or rejected by SPSA. Candidates have a right to appeal that decision. The appeal process is detailed on page 11.

General Requirements

Time Limits

No more than 180 days may elapse between written and practical evaluations. No more than 60 days are allowed between the first and second attempt of a written test. SPSA may permit different time frames based on staff availability or unusual circumstances beyond the candidate's control.

Evaluation Conduct

All participants are expected to partake fully and honestly in the certification process. Participants who have behaved in an unprofessional or dishonest manner during an evaluation will be failed. Accusations of unacceptable or unprofessional behaviour brought against a participant by another candidate will be investigated by the SPSA staff. All participants are expected to behave appropriately at all times, even when not actively engaged in evaluation and testing.

Certification Program Duration

The duration of a certification program depends on the Standard being tested and the facilities available to evaluators. A schedule of certification programs is available from SPSA by calling the office at 306-787-2688.

Make sure you are available for all scheduled evaluations. If you miss any part of the certification program, you will receive a failing mark. In the case of exceptional circumstances SPSA will review the situation and may allow alternate evaluation arrangements.

Documentation

All documentation from both written and practical evaluations is held for a period of 60 days after the conclusion of the evaluation program. Written test answer sheets and practical skills sheets may then be destroyed. Class lists, Pass/Fail results and copies of certificates are held for 5 years. All documents and electronic records relating to SPSA evaluation and certification, including permitted access to materials, are maintained in accordance with The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Disputes and Appeals

If you feel a practical or written exercise was conducted unfairly, speak to an evaluator at the end of the exercise. Do not interrupt an exercise in progress unless you have a concern about safety. The evaluation team will consider your concerns and determine an appropriate action.

Any candidate who feels a decision made by the evaluators is unfair may appeal, in writing, to SPSA within 30 days of the end of the certification program. The appeal must provide details outlining the circumstance surrounding your concerns. The appeal will be investigated and a decision provided within 30 days. The decision of the Commissioner of Emergency Management and Fire Safety is final.

Proctored Evaluations

Certification programs normally have written and practical evaluations conducted during a single SPSA visit. However, in some circumstances, written and practical evaluations may be held at different times and/or locations. When SPSA staff are not available, candidates may arrange for written evaluations to be proctored at a convenient time and/or location.

Acceptable proctors administer written tests at a time and place that is convenient to their schedule. Proctored evaluations must be arranged well in advance through SPSA.

Acceptable Proctors

Acceptable proctors are persons who hold a position of trust such as, municipal administrators, teachers, pastors, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and any person approved by SPSA. Proctors cannot be members of the same fire department as the candidate, nor can they be related to the candidate.

Arranging a Proctored Evaluation

Candidates must apply, in writing, to SPSA providing the following information:

- Name of the proctor.
- Proctor's employment or position of trust.
- Proctor's telephone number.
- Proctor's address (where the test materials are to be sent).
- NFPA Standard and Level, i.e.: NFPA 1041, Fire Service Instructor Level 1.
- Proposed date for the written evaluation.
- Names of those writing the evaluation.

SPSA will contact the proctor directly. Proctoring instructions, record keeping documents and testing material are sent to the proctor, not to the candidate or department sponsoring the evaluation. Applications to use a proctor should be sent to SPSA well in advance of the proposed test date.

Proctors will be asked to sign a declaration that they intend to comply with SPSA rules and regulations governing written tests. Those who decline to sign the declaration will not be allowed to serve as a proctor. A verbal Solemn Declaration is acceptable in cases where a proctor cannot sign a written statement for religious or other reasons of conscience.

Proctors must strictly follow the procedures for administering a written test as detailed in this document. Misconduct by a proctor, intentional or otherwise, will lead to the invalidation of all tests. Proctors who have committed intentional misconduct will not be permitted to serve as a proctor for any other testing conducted by SPSA. Participants will be required to rewrite a new version of the test. A test invalidated as a result of misconduct by a proctor will not count as one of the two attempts allowed participants to successfully complete the written evaluation portion of a certification program.

Terminology

Appendix

The SPSA document that details the requirements and process for gaining certification in each available NFPA Standard.

Application

The process of submitting an application form with all the necessary supporting documentation detailed in the appropriate Appendix.

Candidate

An eligible fire service member or emergency responder who has completed all prerequisites detailed in the appropriate Appendix and has submitted an application for certification.

Certification

The process of completing all necessary steps, prerequisites and being successfully evaluated. Successful certification results in the awarding of a certificate.

Certificate

The document issued by SPSA and endorsed by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) upon successful completion of an evaluation program.

Evaluation Session

The process of practical and written testing.

IFSAC

International Fire Service Accreditation Congress. A peer driven self governing system that accredits fire service certification programs. As a member in good standing with IFSAC, certificates issued by SPSA bear the IFSAC seal.

Job Performance Requirements (JPRs)

JPRs list the specific skills which must be completed and documented before participation in testing and evaluation sessions. JPRs are listed in each Appendix.

Knowledge Requirements

These are the theory components listed in each NFPA Standard. Knowledge requirements are evaluated by multiple-choice written exams.

NFPA

The National Fire Protection Association is a non-profit organization that develops standards covering all aspects of fire service qualifications, practices and implementation. NFPA Standards are accepted around the world.

Participant

An eligible fire service member or emergency responder who has been accepted into and is taking part in an evaluation session.

Prerequisites

Tasks and documents that must be completed before a candidate may participate in an evaluation session.

Provincial Recognition of Training (PRT) Certificate

Issued by SPSA, these certificates recognize training based on established teaching curriculum. Requirements for provincial recognition are listed in Appendix A.

SPSA

Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. A government all hazards agency crown corporation.