

## Leveraging COVID-19 Responses to Assist the Qualifications Process

Our membership has been letting the AHIMTA Board of Directors and Incident Qualification System Committee (IQSC) know about some of the hybrid response structures and challenging conditions being experienced while managing the response to the Corona Virus pandemic.

We have also heard from several members that they have not had time to take advantage of or been able to think through how they can best use these deployments to assist in furthering personal and team qualifications process. Despite the many challenges we face, every deployment, including those related to the COVID-19 responses, can assist in furthering the qualifications process if some basic ground rules and **suggestions** are followed.

To help our members in this challenging time the IQSC decided that distributing tips, hints, and answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding qualifications could be a valuable benefit to our members who are asking.

Remember, your own state or local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) ICS qualifications guide should be followed as the authoritative answer. If you have adopted the Association's Interstate Incident Management Qualifications System (IIMQS) as your guidance and have not changed the process, then the answers that follow directly apply. If you have adopted or worked off the FEMA National Qualifications System (NQS) or modified either when implementing your guidance, then you need to reference the same section in your guide to see if it is different. Your individual qualifications guide may be more restrictive than the NQS or IIMQS, however, **you should not be less restrictive.**

### **Question #1: is it possible to work on tasks in a Position Task Book (PTB) prior to completing all the prerequisite training courses?**

Answer: **Yes.** The IIMQS (page 21) permits trainees to work on their PTB tasks prior to achieving all required course work and prerequisites. However, all courses and prerequisites must be completed prior to being certified as qualified. In addition, the final PTB evaluation should be completed by a qualified evaluator (page 83 in IIMQS or page 10 in the NQS)

The FEMA NQS (page 9) states it is up to the AHJ to permit the simultaneous completion, "trainees should meet all prerequisites for a given position before the AHJ issues the trainee the PTB for the position. However, this is not always practical, and AHJs often allow trainees to pursue position prerequisites while working to complete the PTB at the same time."

### **Question #2: Someone told me that since I have completed my Position Task Book (PTB), I am now qualified, is that true?**

Answer: **No.** In the IIMQS (page 21) and NQS (page 12), completion of a PTB does NOT mean you are qualified or will or should be certified as qualified. It means you have completed your PTB. You cannot start the next step until you have completed all "required training for the position including completion of any certifications or licenses."

The next step is "Step #4," assembling your qualifications package that has the prerequisite course work certificates, medical and physical documentation, and any other items the AHJ

has deemed necessary during the qualification process. Then that information should go to a qualifications review board for them to review it and check all elements that are part of the qualifications process. Only after the qualifications review board has determined that you should be certified as qualified, should that occur. Page 21 of the 2018 IIMQS explains all six steps.

**Question #3: I have just opened my ICS Position Task Book (PTB) for a position, so I am not ready for anyone to sign any tasks. While I am working during the deployment, what can I do to get closer to being able to get any tasks signed off?**

Answer: Your PTB is documentation of the three-step training process. Being ready to have a task in your PTB signed off is the third step. Appendix A of the IIMQS describes all three steps and how a trainee works through the process. Appendix B of the NQS describes the same three-step process, Training, Coaching, and Evaluation.

Even if you just received your PTB, you could still learn, and most importantly, practice the new skills you are learning. If you are thrust into a position and your coach is not available, you are being placed in a difficult position but there are ways to learn – even if not the most preferable. If the skill is covered in the NIMS All-Hazards Planning Process video (found on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), you can watch the appropriate part. You can ask someone for help who is qualified or knows or has had that task signed off. Although these are not preferable to the recommended Coach/Trainer to Trainee relationship, the IQSC understands that the Covid-19 responses are particularly challenging. Finding a way to learn a new skill correctly and then being able to practice it will take you significantly closer to being ready for the third step of the PTB process, the Evaluation.

**Question #4: I have a position task book but there is no one qualified to sign tasks, what do I do?**

Answer: This can be a frustrating experience and is a problem shared by most teams in the development stage. However, there are solutions. Find an existing team that can provide qualified personnel to evaluate individuals and sign appropriate tasks. The evaluator must be qualified in the position they are evaluating OR be qualified in a position that supervises that position in the ICS (IIMQS Guide, page 11, Section II). Individuals qualified under other nationally recognized systems such as NWCG or USCG are also qualified to sign tasks under IIMQS Guide, page 11, Section II (B)(12).

**Question #5: Can I complete my Position Task Book during one deployment?**

Answer: **No**, The IIMQS (page 24, Section III (E)) states, *“Two or more position performance assignments must be experienced before certification, one of which must be an actual incident meeting the requirements of task code I1 and not a qualifying event or exercise.”*

**Question #6: Can I complete my Position Task Book entirely in an EOC?**

Answer: **No.** The IIMQS (pages 18/19, III.A.4), indicates that at least one position performance assignment as a member of an IMT providing on-site command and control, is required for an individual pursuing qualification for an IMT position.

For additional information or to reference the All Hazards Incident Management Teams Association's (AHIMTA) Interstate Incident Management Qualifications System (IIMQS) Guide, or FEMA's National Qualifications System (NQS) Guide, click on the links below:

<https://www.ahimta.org/resources/Documents/IIMTQS/IIMQS%20Final%20Accepted%2020181001.pdf>

[https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1523470612203-906948554492c1f2663c9e69eb636401/NIMS\\_NQS\\_Guideline\\_April2018.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1523470612203-906948554492c1f2663c9e69eb636401/NIMS_NQS_Guideline_April2018.pdf)