

# 2025 Pro Board Annual Training Conference



## COA Opinions In Practice

Andrela Riley – Accreditation Coordinator, South Carolina Fire Academy

Dr. John Culbertson – Director, Montana State University Fire Service Training

Craig Richardson – Chief, Nanaimo Fire Rescue (retired)

Michael Lee – Accreditation Manager, NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control

# Agenda



- Definitions
- Purpose of the Committee on Accreditation (COA)
- Development Process
- COA Opinion Utilization
- COA Opinion Format

# Definitions



- COA – Pro Board Committee on Accreditation
- COA Policy Opinions: Published decisions by the Committee on Accreditation that indicate how, in specific situations, the COA determines with the accreditation criteria.



# Purpose of COA

- The Committee on Accreditation (COA) shall function as an arm of the Board of Directors.
- COA primary function is to evaluate agencies wishing to become Pro Board accredited against the established criteria for accreditation.
- The Accreditation Manager provides guidance and assistance to agencies seeking to become accredited.
- Accreditation, under the strict guidelines established by the Pro Board - Board of Directors, allows an accredited agency to issue certifications in the National Professional Qualifications System.



# Purpose of Opinions Document

- Empowered by Board of Directors to Develop Opinions
- Companion to the Self-Assessment
- Indicate how the COA determines compliance in specific situations
- Published for agency use when completing an application, and as a guide in test development.

# Development Process



- Accredited agencies, COA members, or changes to the National Fire Protection Association Pro Qual Standards (NFPA)
- Majority vote
- Opinions
  - Date of the opinion
  - Related criteria from the Self-Assessment
- Opinions periodically reviewed by COA. Revised/Updated as needed.

# Opinion Utilization



## Guidance

- Developing policy
- Completing the Self-Assessment
- Determine agency's policies adhere to Pro Board accreditation criteria
- Citation for non-compliance during a site visit
- The COA's decision applies to all agencies, or all similarly situated agencies, if the opinion is not universal in nature.

# Document Format (Organization)



- I. General COA Opinion- specific aspects of the accreditation process
- II. Opinions that relate to specific NFPA standards
- III. A matrix that relates each opinion to its corresponding self-assessment criteria



# Presentation Overview



- Testing of Job Performances Requirements
- Video Assessment
- Testing Multiple Levels in a Single Examination
- NFPA 1010: Testing of Live Fire Objectives
- Use of Simulation for Live Fire Testing
- Incremental Testing of Candidates

# Testing of Job Performances Requirements



- Applicable to criteria: TD2
- Purpose: align the language used in Pro Board requirements for testing JPRs with the current language in NFPA 1000
- The NFPA critical components of the JPR are as follows:
  - Task: Partially described using an action verb
  - Condition: Tools, equipment, and other materials to be provided
  - Standard: Evaluation parameters and performance outcomes
- Agencies **MUST** test the actions and outcomes of the JPR critical components.

## Testing JPRs (cont.)



- Accredited agencies must ensure the Requisite Knowledge (RK) and Requisite Skills (RS) for each JPR have been verified by document review or tested.
- The testing of a candidate's RK and RS can be conducted before or simultaneously with the testing of the critical components of the JPR.
- Document review, however, must be conducted before testing.
- Accredited agencies must detail this practice in the Self-Assessment document and adhere to the components for each JPR of each level and standard to which the agency is accredited

# Video Assessment (New)



- Applicable to TA5
- Describes how an agency may utilize technology for testing at a distance, but maintain test process integrity.
- Applicable to both Live (real-Time) or Recorded Video.
- Requires a test facilitator be present to ensure:
  - Testing is conducted following accredited criteria
  - There is no difference between video and in-person evaluation
  - Alleviate limitations of what camera can capture
- Requires a Change in Practice application

# Testing Multiple Levels in a Single Examination



- Applicable to criteria: PA3, TD2
- Purpose: identify the requirements agencies must meet if they will be testing more than one chapter or level in a single test instrument.
  - Example: Firefighter I & II
  - Example: Fire Officer I & II
- Test instrument includes any items not correlated to the level being tested
  - Scoring of that instrument must be segregated

# Testing Multiple Levels (cont.)



- Test instrument includes any items not correlated to the level being tested
  - Scoring of that instrument must be segregated
-

# NFPA 1010: Testing of Live Fire Objectives



- Applicable to criteria: TA4
- The COA does not direct agencies on how to conduct testing and evaluations.
- Opinion of the COA: agencies must have policies and procedures in place to meet or exceed the requirements of the current edition of NFPA 1403, *Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions*



## Testing Live Fire Objectives (cont.)

- At minimum, agency policy must address the NFPA elements
  - Chapter 4 - General
  - Chapter 9 – Reports and Records
- If the agency utilizes the following, the corresponding chapters must be addressed.
  - Acquired Structures – Chapter 5
  - Gas Fired Structures and Mobile Training Props - Chapter 6
  - Non-Gas Fired Structures and Mobile Training Props - Chapter 7
  - Exterior live Fire Training Props - Chapter 8





# Use of Simulation for Live Fire Testing

- Applicable to criteria: TD2
- Candidate assessments of JPRs
  - Preferred to be assessed in Live Fire environment.
  - Extinguishment of a fire assessed in an environment with live fire and in compliance with NFPA 1403.
- Many skills- focused JPRs that do not require extinguishment are assessed using a simulation of parts of the tasks and props in those assessments.



## Simulation (cont.)

Candidates may be assessed for the JPRs that require extinguishment of fire using a simulation of the fire if the following conditions are met:

- The certifying agency requires verifiable documentation
- The simulation is of a nature that includes a demonstration of all of the actual physical tasks of the associated JPR
- The assessment checklist requires the candidate to verbalize actions
  - “Due to the extreme heat, I am going to open the nozzle in a straight stream, on the ceiling, in short bursts.”
  - “I am directing the stream at the seat of the fire.”
  - “I have knocked down the main body of the fire, and I am shutting down the nozzle to watch, listen, and wait.”

# Incremental Testing of Candidates



- Applicable to criteria: TA5, TA6
- Purpose: The integrity of the testing process is maintained
- Certification testing may be done incrementally during a training program.
  - Skills testing where the resources needed to test the skill are extensive and already deployed during training



# Incremental Testing (cont.)

## Constraints to using incremental testing:

- Must be a clearly defined changeover
- Method to ensure the total of any incremental tests and end of course tests cover the entire level of the standard for which certification is being offered
- A method to ensure the approved scoring criteria are appropriately applied

# Incremental Testing (cont.)



Skills testing: All accredited policies and procedures for skills testing must be followed including the following:

- The instructor of a given skill does not act as the evaluator.
- Instructors must be notified that they cannot coach or assist the candidates during the evaluation.
- Candidates must be notified that they are participating in an evaluation that is part of their certification test.
- Candidates must be segregated from the test area.

## Incremental Testing (cont.)



Cognitive (written) examinations: All accredited policies and procedures for cognitive (written) testing must be followed including the following:

- Agencies must use only approved proctors and test security procedures.
- Candidates must be notified that they are participating in an evaluation that is part of their certification test.

# Adding/Updating Levels or Methodologies



- Applicable to all Criteria
- Purpose of this opinion is to ensure the agency is utilizing assessment methodologies and levels of certification are accredited by the COA to test each Job Performance Requirement (JPR), Requisite Knowledge (RK), and Requisite Skill (RS)



## Adding / Updating (cont.)

- Applies when an agency wants seeks to do any of the following:
  - Certify to a new level with new assessment methodology.
  - Certify to an existing certification level with an agency new methodology.
  - Certify to a new level with an existing methodology.
  - Certify to an existing level with an existing methodology.
  - Combinations of levels and methodologies that have not previously been approved
  - All requests to utilize the portfolio methodology





# Questions?