



AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is AHIMTA taking the step to become a certification entity?

AHIMTA is establishing the AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System (AIMCS) first and foremost because it aligns with its mission of inspiring excellence in incident management. AHIMTA believes that no other organization has the experience, scope, and expertise to deliver a comprehensive and quality all-hazards certification process on a national level for ICS positions. Many State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) jurisdictions do not have a qualification process and AHIMTA believes having an organization that does the bulk of the work through a certification process will make obtaining an SLTT qualification and credentialing process more achievable.

2. What is the difference between the FEMA National Qualification System (NQS) and the AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System (AIMCS)?

The National Qualification System (NQS) establishes guidance and tools to assist stakeholders in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel in incident management positions and other emergency discipline positions. It describes the basic principles of standard qualification, certification, and credentialing processes and introduces primary tools to help Authorities Having Jurisdiction and/or SLTTs establish their own processes.

The AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System is a complete certification system that uses qualification standards that exceed the guidelines within NQS so that Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), SLTTs, private sector employers, and nonprofit sector employers can be assured that any personnel receiving an AHIMTA certification meet and exceed the guidelines within NQS. The AIMCS is the gold standard of all-hazards incident and event management training and experience verification.

3. What makes the AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System superior to the guidelines found in the NQS?

There are several requirements within the AIMCS standards that make the AHIMTA certification a more difficult standard to achieve than the guidelines found within the FEMA NQS. Some of them include:

1. Additional incident management training requirements in all positions.
2. Leadership training requirements in all positions.
3. More stringent requirements for qualifying incidents to complete Position Task Books.
4. More stringent currency requirements.
5. The AIMCS has a 15-hour per year continuing/professional education requirement.

4. Does the AHIMTA certification compete with my state's qualification process (if we have one)?

No. In fact AHIMTA continues to encourage states to adopt the AHIMTA IIMQS and use the Model Qualifications Guide. AHIMTA hopes that SLTTs that want a qualification system can use AHIMTA certifications to make establishing a qualification process easier. AHIMTA also hopes that SLTTs with previously established qualification systems can use AHIMTA certifications to make their process easier.

5. Is AHIMTA eliminating its Interstate Incident Management Qualification System (IIMQS) and/or Model Qualifications Guide?

No. AHIMTA still encourages SLTTs/AHJs to adopt the AHIMTA IIMQS and use the Model Qualifications Guide (MQS) to implement the IIMQS. (Note: AHIMTA is currently considering replacing the IIMQS with the MQS because the MQS contains all that is in the IIMQS with additional specificity)

6. What is the benefit of obtaining an AHIMTA certification?

Individuals who obtain an AHIMTA certification can easily demonstrate to potential employers (including SLTTs/AHJs) that the individual has met the defined qualifications criteria for incident management positions and have demonstrated performance within that position. This makes the individual more attractive to employers.

7. What is the AHIMTA incident management certification process?

The AIMCS certification process is very similar to previous qualification system processes within the incident management spectrum. It is only adjusted to be achieved at a centralized and national level rather than at a state or local level. The AIMCS requires core training achievement followed by demonstrated performance in an individual's ICS position utilizing Position Task Books (PTBs). The application is then reviewed by an AHIMTA certification committee that consists of qualified individuals.

8. Can I get an AHIMTA certification even though I am already qualified under a different qualifications system?

Yes. Individuals qualified under another qualifications system should consider applying for their AIMCS certification using the Recognition of Prior Learning process.

9. Why should I get an AHIMTA certification if I am already qualified in another system?

AHIMTA is positioning the AIMCS process to provide a "portability" capability that does not exist currently, meaning that a certification can be recognized across AHJs and SLTTs and across other qualification systems. On page 11 of the NQS it discusses developing a system that enables portability of qualifications. Additionally, an AIMCS certification can be used on resumes demonstrating an independent third-party verification of training and achieved performance.

10. What is the difference between certification and qualification?

While different SLTTs may have different definitions within their laws and the terms are often used interchangeably, in general terms, AHIMTA uses the following definitions that are aligned to those found in the FEMA NQS:

Qualification is the process of enabling personnel to perform the duties of a specific position and documenting their proficiency of the capabilities required by the position. During the qualification process, trainees—individuals seeking to become qualified—meet the prerequisites for the position they are pursuing by completing training courses, obtaining professional or technical licenses and certifications, if appropriate, and meeting the physical and medical fitness requirements established for the position they are pursuing.

An AHIMTA certification is a formal acknowledgment from AHIMTA stating that an individual has met the established AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System Position Qualification Requirements, a certifying official (the AHIMTA President), and AHIMTA's Qualification Review Board (the Certification Committee), examines the trainee's application which includes training records and performance records. If the trainee demonstrates that they meet all requirements, AHIMTA certifies the individual.

Please note that the term "certification" in the context of the NQS refers to the AHJ's certification that an individual is qualified for a specific incident-related position. It is distinct from professional certifications and licenses. An AHIMTA certification using the AIMCS is an independent third-party professional certification that AHJ's can use as a part of the AHJ's determination of qualification.

11. What is credentialing?

Credentialing is the process of providing documentation that identifies personnel and verifies their qualifications for certain positions.

Within an emergency management context, AHIMTA cannot provide "credentials" because it lacks authority on behalf of SLTTs/AHJs and employers. AHIMTA will provide a certificate and a letter indicating achievement of an AHIMTA certification, but the SLTT/AHJ/employer must be the credentialing entity.

Example: A law enforcement officer's credentials are their badge and law enforcement agency's identification card. Those credentials identify an officer as someone who has met the professional standards required of the organization and is also empowered to enforce the laws they have sworn to uphold. An AHIMTA Certification only states that an individual has met the standards within AIMCS but does not empower any official authority upon the individual, as AHIMTA has no authority to do so.

12. Will AHIMTA credential people who pass the AHIMTA certification process?

No. AHIMTA does not have the authority to credential someone. However, the AHIMTA will provide a certificate and letter describing and documenting the qualifications and certification process the applicant has successfully achieved and indicate the certified individual is listed within the AHIMTA certification database.

13. How long is the AHIMTA certification good for?

The AHIMTA certification period varies from position to position and are listed in the AHIMTA Incident Management Certification System Position Qualification Requirements. The shortest certification is the Safety Officer is two years. Several positions share the longest term which is four years.

14. How do I maintain currency and recertify?

A certified individual can achieve recertification by documenting successful performance in their certified position or in a position listed in the Position Qualification Requirements or in a higher position (as long as the person was previously certified in that position). The individual is also required to complete and document 15 hours of professional or continuing education per year, a requirement that exceeds the FEMA National Qualification System guidelines.

15. How much will the certification cost and what expenses are the costs covering?

The non-refundable certification fee is still being determined. There will be a discount for AHIMTA members. Costs for the certification will cover a variety of expenses. Some examples are start-up costs, attorney fees, insurance, additional staff costs, materials, information technology, and travel costs to enable the Certification Committee to convene.

16. What happens if I fail to achieve the certification?

Applicants must pay for the certification prior to submitting the application. If there is a problem with the application once it is reviewed by the Certification Committee, the application will be returned with a list of deficiencies in the application and recommendations to correct the application. The applicant will have six months to re-submit a corrected application without having to pay an additional fee.