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To: Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee
State Board of Fire Services

From: Brandon Erickson, Program Analyst

SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:

Hazardous Material Awareness and Operations Information Update

Recommended Actions:

Information Only

Background Information:

State Fire Training's Fire Fighter 1 (2019) certification includes NFPA 1072: Hazardous Material Awareness and Operations certification. All candidates seeking Fire Fighter 1 Certification are required to complete and pass the Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat First Responder Awareness (FRA) and Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat First Responder Operations (FRO) certification exam. The Fire Fighter 1B certification exam includes testing candidates using both a cognitive and a psychomotor skill evaluation.

SFT also allows Accredited Local Academies (ALA) and Accredited Regional Training Programs (ARTPs) to utilize the Cal OES California Specialized Training Institute (CSTI) and International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Pro Board accredited HazMat FRA/FRO programs to meet the requirements of Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat FRA/FRO. To qualify as an FF1B equivalency, and prior to issuance of an SFT Fire Fighter 1 certification, SFT must receive documentation from the Pro Board accredited entity verifying the certification level, certification date, and certification seal number for each candidate.

Analysis/Summary of Issue:

CSTI and IAFF HazMat FRA/FRO Certification Reminders and Expectations:

SFT has been receiving an increasing amount of inquiries from individual candidates who participated in an ALA or ARTP program that utilized the CSTI or IAFF Pro Board equivalency asking when the equivalency will be issued so that they may receive their Fire Fighter 1 certification. SFT will not issue an equivalency or a Fire Fighter 1 certification until the required certification data from CSTI or IAFF has been received. SFT FF1B results may take up to 3 weeks to process. Comparatively, SFT has observed that on average it can take 8-24 weeks to receive FF1B equivalency information from CSTI or IAFF, therefore, ALAs and ARTPs should prepare student expectations accordingly. Prolonged delays with CSTI and IAFF can often be attributed to a delay in returning necessary documents and/or not paying an invoice timely. Academies could also consider completing the HazMat module prior to initiating the FF1A and FF1C modules to provide CSTI and IAFF with additional lead time for processing. Lastly, the Fire Fighter 1 exam registration fee is the same whether or not the CSTI/IAFF equivalency is used.

Fire Fighter 1B Exam Lengths:

SFT implemented the Fire Fighter 1 (2019) HazMat cognitive exam in 2020 as a single combined 25-item exam. After learning that the testing platform could not score Awareness and Operations exams individually, SFT separated the two exams. The Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat First Responder Awareness exam is comprised of ten (10) items, and the Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat First Responder Operations exam is composed of fifteen (15) items.

SFT consulted test development and validation specialists from California State University Sacramento (CSUS) who continue to evaluate the FF1B FRA and FRO results. Their primary recommendation to improve the reliability of the FF1B FRA/FRO exams is to increase the number of test items to allow candidates to sufficiently demonstrate knowledge of the subject.

Beginning August 1, 2021, SFT initiated a voluntary (for credit) pilot program for Fire Fighter 1B: HazMat FRA and FRO certification exams with an increased number of test items and time for completion. FRA and FRO each contain 30 items and each allows for up to 36 minutes to complete. After reviewing the pilot exam data from the last 10 months the CSUS specialists confirm that performance and reliability have improved. They recommend that SFT moves forward with the expansion of test items and make permanent the increased test items and timetable included in the pilot program as a replacement to the existing 25-item/30-minute cognitive exam.

SFT will be forming a cadre later this year to update the Fire Fighter 1B program as a result of the NFPA 1072 Professional Qualification consolidation to NFPA 470: Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Standard for Responders (2022). SFT anticipates that there will be updates to all components of the program, including the course plan, Certification Training Standard (CTS) Guide, skill sheets, as well as the certification exam. SFT will seek a recommendation from this cadre on what the appropriate number of test items should be after evaluating the changes in implementing the new NFPA 470 Professional Qualification standard.