



**COVID-19 Impact on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers and Requested URGENT Action of Governors to Ensure Continuity of the Supply of Certified Emergency Medical Services Professionals (EMTs & Paramedics) and other Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers**

**Problem:** The national COVID-19 pandemic containment efforts inadvertently impact a vital component of the licensure pathway for Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers like emergency medical services (EMS) responders (EMTs and paramedics) and many other health professions. Without immediate intervention, thousands of professionals – prepared and scheduled to take their final certification exams – could be **prohibited from responding to the national public health crisis.**

**Facts bearing on the problem:**

- Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers like EMTs, Paramedics, and other health professionals – in the interest of public safety - are **required to take certification or licensure examinations** prior to state licensure. For over 70 health professions, these examinations are administered by Pearson VUE in either a Pearson VUE owned facility (PPC) or its network of independent third-party test centers (PVTCs).
- During the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>, most colleges and universities in the United States closed; consequently, this **closed many PVTCs** co-located on these campuses where many EMT and Paramedic candidates take their national certification examinations.
- On Tuesday, March 17, 2020, in response to the national guidance calling for social distancing, Pearson VUE closed their facilities in the United States, including its PPCs, thus significantly diminishing the licensing pathway for Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.
- Based on the nation-wide closure of Pearson VUE and college and university test centers, **12,000+ EMT and Paramedic candidates are currently unable to test or have a significantly diminished ability to test, plus an additional 60,000+ EMTs and Paramedic candidates will be unable to test between now and June 30..**
- Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers like healthcare professionals, including EMTs and Paramedics, are required to obtain necessary education, clinical experience, and successfully complete certification examinations prior to being eligible for state licensure. State licensing and regulatory agencies for EMS professionals, represented by NASEMSO, are dependent on the national boards/certifications to assess competence (protection of the public) for licensure. Similar licensing and regulatory agencies exist for various others Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.
- EMTs and Paramedics, as well as other public safety and healthcare personnel (i.e., Nurses) are defined as “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers” in the “Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response” (03/19/2020; under the authority of Presidential Directive 7)

- The COVID-19 pandemic is already straining the nation’s healthcare system. Over 1,400 EMS professionals are currently quarantined, and we anticipate these numbers to quickly rise.
- Pearson VUE and college and universities can implement measures and recommended guidelines at PPCs and PVTs during the COVID -19 emergency including appropriate social distancing, hygiene and disinfection. However, the closing of many colleges and universities, as well as closing of commercial businesses resulted in reduction of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers. The services provided by Pearson VUE are essential in allowing Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers to enter the workforce and provide the necessary services which are vital during the pandemic.

**Solutions:**

- We ask that the Governors promptly designate the services provided by Pearson VUE in conjunction with the licensing and certification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers as “Essential Services” and/or “Life-Sustaining Services” according to the applicable state definitions and to open colleges and universities that operate test centers which have historically administered EMT and Paramedic certification examinations. Once the Governors designate Pearson VUE’s services as Essential and/or Life-Sustaining Services, and authorize the opening of the colleges and universities that operate test centers that deliver exams on behalf of Pearson VUE, EMT and Paramedic certification examinations, other certification and licensing examinations for “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers”, as well as those services provided in conjunction with such certification and licensing may be offered by Pearson VUE and its test centers.
- **Pearson VUE and its PPCs**, owned and operated through Pearson VUE, and its PVTs **need to be viewed as a critical infrastructure** as they allow the continuity of certifying and licensing of critical infrastructure workers (EMTs, Paramedics, Nurses, and more). Further, the employees working for Pearson VUE who provide these services in conjunction with certifying and licensing Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers need to be identified as “Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers.”
  - “Functioning critical infrastructure is imperative during the response to the COVID-19 emergency for both public health and safety as well as community well-being. Certain critical infrastructure industries have a special responsibility in these times to continue operations.” “Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response” (03/19/2020; under the authority of Presidential Directive 7)

Taking these actions to recognize Pearson VUE and its test centers as critical infrastructures, as well as authorizing the re-opening of Pearson VUE and its test centers so that essential critical infrastructure workers can re-start taking certification examinations will help to preserve the fragile, but critical pipeline of new EMS and other healthcare professionals during this national emergency.