

Application Guidelines for Certification from VEMA

The intent of this document is to provide detailed information for the completion of any / all applications for professional certification from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA). The certification program is jointly administered by VEMA and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. The certification program is intended to recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of applicants and their achievements as an Emergency Management Professional.

Proper documentation is key. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide support documents that prove the certification requirements are satisfactorily met. Applications *must* be submitted in a simple three-ring binder or folder using properly labeled, plain section dividers. Ensure all materials are easy to read and that supporting documents are included immediately behind the applicable form. Avoid the use of page protectors. **The best documentation is always from a third party and independent. Self-generated documents will receive significant scrutiny.**

The application is subject to review of no fewer than two (2) members of the Certification Committee based on the requirements in this document. *Applicants should keep a copy of their application* in the event that the Committee has questions, or needs additional information for any items. In addition, if applicants would like the original application returned to them, a self-addressed and postage paid envelope should be included with the original submission.

Detailed information for each section of the application can be found on the following pages.

Questions regarding the application process should be directed to the Certification Committee Chair via email at certificationchair@vemaweb.org.

Work History / Experience

- I. Work Experience must be Emergency Management related. Applicant must be responsible for or participate in all four phases of Emergency Management: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. Proof of Emergency Management related work and experience must be documented and included in the applicant's submittal through *one of the following*:
 - a. Position Description
 - b. Signed letter from Emergency Management Coordinator from applicant's jurisdiction including dates of emergency management service.
 - c. Signed letter from supervisor of applicant stating emergency management as a primary function of applicant's position and dates of emergency management service.
- II. Please note: Firefighters, law enforcement personnel, and other public safety-related personnel must show emergency management related duties such as staffing a locality's Emergency Operations Center. This can be done through any of the above (a-c).

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References

- I. Three references are required for all certification levels.
- II. The first reference must be a letter from the applicant's current supervisor. In addition to a positive reference for the applicant, in general, the letter should also indicate the supervisor's support of the application.
- III. Letters from the remaining two references are not required. However, additional references should be listed, based on qualifications listed below.
- IV. Other reference sources who qualify are:
 - a. A past supervisor (within last seven (7) years)
 - b. Local, state, or federal government officials, or department heads;
 - c. Emergency service organization officials (e.g., public, private, military, tribal)
 - d. State or national emergency management association officers
 - e. Others (by request to and approval of the Certification Committee)
- III. Reference sources who do not qualify are:
 - a. A subordinate
 - b. A former student
 - c. Friends, neighbors, or relatives

NOTE: Candidates are encouraged to inform references that they have been listed. Committee members, at their discretion, may call references to verify information.

Education

- I. All candidates (except for those applying for EMA) are required to have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED.
- II. Candidates must provide a copy of their high school or college diploma (or official transcript showing graduation date) in order to satisfy this requirement. If the name has changed due to change in marital status or other reason, a brief explanation should be attached.

Training

- I. Applicants should pay close attention to the time requirements in the Training Section. For initial certification, training must have occurred within the past ten years. For recertification, training must have occurred within the last certification period.
- II. Training course documentation (certificates, training submission forms, etc.) should be put into the same order as they are listed on the Training Summary Form. If the applicant presents training in an unorganized manner, the committee may opt to disqualify the training section of the application. This may cause the entire application to be denied.
- III. Acceptable Emergency Management Training includes any local, state, federal or Institutes of Higher Education sponsored emergency management training course or other emergency management-related training course.
- IV. Applicants are required to fill out and include a Training Course Submission Form for courses that are NOT given by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management or the Emergency Management Institute. (Failure to submit this form for unlisted courses will result in disqualification of the training course.)
- V. A maximum of 25 hours in any one course will be accepted per documented training course.
- VI. For PEM and AEM applications:

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- a. No more than 50% of total training hours (for an initial application) in either category can be in FEMA/EMI Independent Study Courses. A majority of courses submitted should be classroom training hours.
 - b. Documentation showing the completion of FEMA's Professional Development Series (PDS) of classes should be included.
- VII. Applicants may also submit their Advanced Professional Series (APS) certificate as 100 Emergency Management training hours. If preferred, classes may be submitted separately.
- VIII. Consideration of college courses to fulfill Training Requirements:
- a. Completed College Degrees in Emergency Management or a related field (such as Homeland Security) at an institution of higher education with an accredited Emergency Management program can be submitted as the equivalent to the full training (Emergency Management and General Management) hour requirements. However, a general studies program cannot be used to fulfill this requirement.
 - b. Individual college classes can also count towards the training requirements. The course has to be a specific management or Emergency Management topic course. Each college course is allowed to be counted for *up to twenty-five (25) hours* of the requirements. The number of hours is not the same as the number of "credit hours" given for the class.
- IX. It is suggested that the applicant submit documentation for more than the minimum required hours. This could potentially avoid the denial of the application if a training submission is found to not qualify as valid.

Professional Contributions

The Virginia Requirement: New to VEMA's certifications, **this requirement enhances the value of a VaPEM and VaAEM by requiring half of all Professional Contributions to have been performed in and/or directly impacting emergency management operations in Virginia.** Meeting this requirement can be accomplished by submitting documentation that supports the candidate's involvement in any of the professional contribution activities in Virginia.

- I. All Professional Contributions must have occurred within the last ten years.
- II. Each category is limited to one (1) contribution credit.
- III. Do not duplicate any activities already included in the application (i.e., Disaster Experience or Exercise).
- IV. It is suggested to submit more than the minimum contributions (i.e., if you are required to submit six (6) contributions, submit an extra one or two to make sure that the requirements are fulfilled).
- V. Documentation must be submitted to clearly support your claim of the activity. Depending on the contribution, documentation may include a letter of verification, a copy of minutes from a meeting, or a conference agenda. When in doubt, ask a committee member or provide additional documentation.
- VI. Category Specific Requirements are as follows:

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1. Disaster Experience
 - a. Evidence of significant disaster management experience – delineates that candidate was actively involved in the response or recovery phase of an event.
 - b. This documentation can be in the form of a letter from the project lead or supervisor indicating that the applicant demonstrated an active role in the referenced event.
2. Exercise Design Experience
 - a. Development of a disaster exercise – either full scale, functional or tabletop.
 - b. Documentation showing the exercise plan / situation manual or after action report is encouraged.
 - c. Documentation must demonstrate a significant role in the planning of the exercise, as well as describe the lessons learned as a result of the simulation. A letter from a client or supervisor would satisfy the documentation requirement.
3. Professional Membership
 - a. Active membership in an emergency management related professional organization.
 - b. Participation in one of the organization's subcommittees or work groups for a minimum of two years is preferred.
4. Leadership and Participation
 - a. State, regional, or local committee work resulting in a significant positive impact on the emergency management community.
5. Speaking Engagement
 - a. Educational, formal, or informational speaking engagement on emergency management issues.
 - b. Evidence of multiple speaking engagements, at least three of at least 20 minutes in length, throughout the application period, is required.
 - c. This requirement may include events such as presentations to citizen groups, civic leagues, service organizations, professional organizations, etc. Presentations to groups such as City Council, County Board or Local Emergency Planning Committees are considered job related speaking engagements and are considered part of the Emergency Manager's job.
6. Teaching or Instructing
 - a. Teaching or instructing commitment in the field of emergency management.
 - b. A minimum of 12 hours of classroom instruction is required.
 - c. This can be the same class taught once hours, or a course taught several times over the application period, for a total of 12 classroom hours.
 - d. Please include third-party independent verification that the teaching hours were completed.

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7. Publications
 - a. Publication of an emergency management article, research project, or instructional pamphlet.
 - b. Must be an actual article, with a firm introduction, supporting evidence and conclusion. A simple bulleted list of preparedness activities would not be appropriate.
 - c. The VEMA newsletter is an example of a publication. However, internal newsletters that are distributed by the applicant do not qualify.
8. Audio-Visual and Interactive
 - a. Audio, audio-visual, or software application in the field of emergency management.
 - b. An app or new board in WebEOC are examples of this criteria.
9. Awards or Recognition
 - a. Award or special recognition to an individual or team in the field of emergency management, or in conjunction with an emergency preparedness activity.
 - b. This must come from an outside entity to your specific organization. Employee of the Month does not qualify.
 - c. Please include documentation of your specific role in the receipt of the award.
10. Mitigation Activity
 - a. Contributions toward, or activities in support of, reducing the community's vulnerabilities to hazards.
11. Special Assignment
 - a. Evidence of Special Assignment showing service to the emergency management community outside of daily responsibilities
 - b. An example is deployment to another jurisdiction in support of their disaster operations. Position must not be liaison officer back to your home agency.
12. Service Role
 - a. Service project as a contribution to the local community of the candidate as it directly relates to enhance emergency management activities
13. Professional Development
 - a. Attendance at national or state conference(s) relevant to emergency management.
 - b. Applicant must document at least 20 hours of conference(s) attendance.
14. Other
 - a. Other contributions may be submitted for approval by the certification committee prior to submission of application.