

What is the Credentialing Program?

On Page 2 is an article that was published in the December 2008 edition of *The Responder* regarding credentialing.

Training Information

With regards to training, there are two items in the Skills section.

The *Skills* menu selection allows you to input training you have *completed* and *passed* and have a certificate or some other verification of successful completion.

The *Training* menu selection allows you to select specific modules of a particular course you have completed, but may not have completed the entire class. For example, if you took Firefighting 1 and only completed the ladders part, you'd be able to select that particular module.

Here is some information on the clarification:

<http://raptorcredential.wetpaint.com/page/What+is+the+Difference+Between+Skills+and+Training>.

We know there isn't every single course that could have possibly been taken in the system. As you know, there are literally thousands of classes out there that relate to our field. The point of the system is to capture important courses that provide knowledge and/or skills that could be useful in an emergency. We can then query those skills and get the right people to the right place. If there is a course you believe should be included, please e-mail credentials@chesco.org with the course name, who owns it (ASHI, Red Cross, FEMA, PEMA, DCCC, etc) and why you believe it would be beneficial to include in the system. Also, the vendor is still working on loading training courses into the system so, please, be patient.

Verification/Next Steps

So the next step once everyone is registered is to verify everyone's identity, take pictures, etc. This will happen sometime in September. That's how the training information will be verified, your picture and signature added to the system and the documents section populated.

Speed

If you experience issues of the system being slow, please e-mail credentials@chesco.org with when (date and time), what you were doing in the system, and how long it took for the action to complete.

Security

Here's some information on the security of the information entered, where it is stored and who has access.

Sharing of personal information in today's environment is always a concern. I can assure you the information is extremely secure. Your personal information such as SSN, driver's license, medical information, etc. cannot be viewed by anyone but you or someone with your card in their physical possession AND a Medical clearance. The information that is stored on the data chip is protected by a PIN that you establish and should never be given out.

The data is stored at a data farm in northern Virginia. It is stored in the same area and with the same security measures as the newer Federal Transportation Worker Identification Card (TWIC) and the same area and same security measures as the Federal Bridge which issues security certificates based on security clearances. It's so secure that in order for a software update to be loaded they must physically go to the data center and must go through several layers of security to access the server.

The information that is entered in the website is also transmitted through secure channels to that data center.

The medical information is purely voluntary. It is designed so in the event the card holder becomes unresponsive or is unable to communicate, hospital personnel can view the medical information to better identify the problem and/or treatment.

Credentialing Article

Roles and responsibilities of today's emergency response personnel have become vastly more complicated in the last 10 to 15 years. Terrorism, on both a micro and a macro level, has changed the landscape for emergency responders forever, as have natural disasters, like Hurricane Katrina. The availability of unconventional weapons and the enormous public accountability associated with the many manmade and natural disasters that occur today. These events have contributed to making the world of emergency response manager and field officer one where a well-coordinated and accountable response to incidents, as well as disasters, is key to performing the job. The job today goes far beyond basic response and requires the utmost in preparedness, planning, and accountability.

9/11 sharpened the focus on these requirements, and in many ways, has encouraged city, county, regional, state and federal personnel to come to the planning table together for collaboration on common and coordinated procedures, techniques and technologies, when responding to incidents and disasters. Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security was developed in response to this need, as were the President's Directives on the Management of Domestic Incidents and National Preparedness, which ultimately became what is now known as National Incident Management System (NIMS) requirements. NIMS now provides a venue for a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, State, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together.

Primarily among these best practices is the ability to coordinate and integrate resources and personnel among all jurisdictions and agencies. Full implementation of NIMS requires complete coordination and integration of resources and personnel, ranging through various organizations (911 and Emergency Operations Centers, Firefighters, EMS, Police, Sheriff's, etc) to multiple jurisdictions (local, regional, state and federal) to different communities of interest (anti-terrorism task forces, hazardous materials handling task forces and explosive handling groups, etc). Indeed, multi-agency and jurisdictional coordination and consistency of best practice procedures is at the heart of the NIMS requirements.

A requirement of NIMS is a system that will help verify, quickly and accurately, the identity and qualifications of emergency personnel responding to an incident. Chester County is addressing this by implementing a countywide credentialing system that will document minimum professional qualifications, certifications, training and education requirements that are defined by standards established by FEMA, NFPA and other accrediting organizations.

Chester County is at the forefront of addressing these requirements by implementing a new system that authenticates the credentials of first responders at an emergency scene. Credentials will be authenticated using smart card technology, which will be issued to responders and encoded with critical data obtained using a wireless, hand-held device. Information from the card enables Incident Commanders to:

1. securely establish the identity of emergency responders at the scene of an incident,
2. confirm the qualifications and expertise of responders, allowing incident commanders to dispatch them quickly and appropriately, and
3. enhance the cooperation and efficiency between state and local first responders and their federal counterparts.

DES will issue credentials to approximately 5,000 of the emergency responders in Chester County, including fire, police, EMS, law enforcement, and emergency management. The credentials will enable quick, authorized access from emergency scenes across multiple jurisdictions and agencies.

The physical layout of the card will follow federal identification requirements including picture, name, and a list of the cardholder's disciplines. The secure smart chip will contain important identification and demographic information, training information, health information, and emergency contact information. All data will be secured through fingerprint authentication and a user-chosen PIN code.

The cards issued will also provide secure JNet access to law enforcement in the field and building access if an agency has a system that can read the cards. The system will also build a comprehensive database of emergency personnel and training.

Organizations will identify those responders that will receive a card. The only requirement to receive a card is be sponsored by an emergency response organization. Cardholders will login to an online database and enter needed information. Kiosks will be open throughout the County for a period to collect photographs, verify identity, and collect fingerprints. Once a responder has visited a kiosk the card will be produced and issued. Users will then complete training information at their station and have the information verified. Users will have the ability of updating their database record and their card at the station. Cards will expire every five years. There will be no cost for the card, unless it is lost.

The project is being funded through a partnership with the District Attorney's Office. Senator Specter and Representative Sestak have sponsored a grant through the U.S. Department of Justice for this project. The District Attorney's Office is the recipient of the grant. DES has purchased cards, readers, and printing equipment and will administer the program.