

**Media Contact:** Jeanette Keeffe 702-648-8899  
[Jeanette@NationalTrainingCenter.net](mailto:Jeanette@NationalTrainingCenter.net)

### **Preparing for the New NICET Fire Alarm Exam – Is it Impossible?**

2010 has brought many changes to the industry, yet one that seems to be at the forefront of most industry professional's minds is the changes made to the NICET testing that were implemented early this year. Questions that arise when considering the new Computer Based Testing (CBT) that NICET has converted to are consistent:

What is different about the new CBT exams in comparison to the old paper-and-pencil testing? Is the exam more difficult? What is allowed into the exam? Where are the exams? Do I get to choose the work elements that I want to test on? I previously tested on more than one work element in the old testing, do I now have to convert to Computer Based Testing? I submitted my application in January of 2010, do I have to take the CBT exam?

According to NICET's website ([www.nicet.org](http://www.nicet.org)), "While we tend to refer to these as the new CBT tests, there are actually two parts to this change: 1. "The Standard Model" — This refers to the development process, format, and scoring of the exams. The development process is much more elaborate, rigorous, secure, and costly than in the past, with detailed procedures for the development and approval of every test question. As one progresses up through the Levels, there will be one test for each subsequent Level (or, possibly, 2 or 3, all of which must be passed). Each test will have a passing score that will be based on an analysis of beta test results. 2. Computer-Based Testing — These tests will be administered on a computer at a secure, proctored computer-based testing center. These will normally be part of a network of such centers (currently, Prometric or Pearson VUE). Applications for testing will be sent to NICET, which will respond with an eligibility email or letter containing instructions for scheduling an exam at the appropriate network. Testing may be scheduled at any available time within an eligibility period that will extend for 3 months. Starting February 1, 2010, the first day of transition for Fire Alarm Systems, all applicants will be required to test in the Standard Model/CBT format, **EXCEPT** for those who: Previously tested one or more WEs in that program, or have an active application postmarked prior to February 1, 2010."

While some of the questions posed by industry professionals are answered on the NICET website, there are many that are left unrequited. Where does one turn in order to get the answers they need to appropriately prepare for the CBT NICET exam?

Thomas Jennings, industry professional states, "I made it my goal this year to obtain my NICET Fire Alarm certification in levels one and two, but with all the changes I wasn't sure if I was properly prepared. I didn't know if I should study any differently than my peers did in previous years. The NICET exam has had the reputation of being a difficult exam and I wasn't sure if certification was now even obtainable. I've been working in the industry for over 20 years and feel confident that I know the codes, understand the design and installation process of Fire Alarm Systems, but rumor has it that the new test is difficult, if not impossible to pass for someone with my extensive experience and knowledge. I decided to contact the company that was sure to answer my questions, National Training Center (NTC). I am an avid reader of NTC's Professional Reference books, as they are the only books in the industry that are applications based. Therefore I refer to them often on the job when complicated

situations arise. So I thought if someone could answer my questions, it would be NTC. After I got off the phone from Bryan McLane, VP and instructor at NTC, I felt less anxiety about the CBT NICET exam. Furthermore, after attending NTC's NICET Fire Alarm course I was even more confident that I could obtain my goal in getting NICET certified. This made me and my wife very happy. We're both counting on my certification to help us maintain our standard of living in this difficult economy."

Bryan McLane, Vice President of NTC explains how the new exam differs from the pen and pencil NICET exam, "One big difference those familiar with NICET will immediately notice is the lack of work elements. Work elements are specific areas of fire alarm knowledge that NICET tested candidates on. Certification at different levels required a certain number of work elements from different areas, and specific work elements for higher certification. The new exam is now a single exam that is pass/fail for the entire exam. Level of certification has a separate exam that must be passed in order to earn that level of certification."

Indeed there is no question that the new CBT NICET exam is more difficult, does this mean that studying requires more time and memorization of the codes? Bryan McLane states, "We at NTC have extensively reviewed the differences between the new and old NICET exam and have shaped our training to address how one can best prepare and succeed on the new CBT NICET exam. For those that are familiar with NTC training, they can be assured that our training is still applications based, progressive and fast paced, yet incorporates more studying and test taking strategies. Additionally, we go over the NICET application process, as this too has changed and has left many people in a quandary. Studying is a large part of being properly prepared for the exam, but knowing how to study is the difference between passing and failing."

### **About National Training Center**

National Training Center was founded in 2002 by Charles Aulner. The company was started on a shoestring budget and an idea, 'to provide the Very Best in Training'. In just a few years NTC grew to be the most respected and recognized training provider to the low voltage industry. NTC's staff of industry professionals continues to live up to that tradition today. NTC provides training to meet your company's needs, offering training solutions through their live training, Webinars, high quality online recorded training (available 24/7), and complete line of professional references.

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