

CCWA Candidate Information Bulletin

Commonwealth of Virginia

Blaster Examinations

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, anyone who uses explosives or supervises the loading or firing of explosives, outside of a mining or quarry operation, must be certified as either a “restricted” or “unrestricted” blaster as part of the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC). The Virginia State Fire Marshal’s Office (SFMO) processes all certification applicants for compliance with Section 27-97.2 of the Code of Virginia and is the sole provider of blaster certifications.

The SFMO is working in concert with the Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA) to conduct its certification examinations. Your exam will be given by computer. You may schedule your examination by calling CCWA (804) 523-2292 or emailing trainer@ccwa.vccs.edu . If you are an out-of-state candidate, or your drive time exceeds two (2) hours to a CCWA location, prior special arrangements may be arranged to test at a college in close proximity to your home. This is based on each respective college’s availability.

This bulletin describes the process of registering for and taking a Virginia blaster exam. The main steps in this process are listed below. For information about a step, go to the page listed.

To Take an Exam

1. Submit the exam registration form on Page 6 to CCWA.
2. Once registration has been received, CCWA will assist in scheduling your examination. Call CCWA at (804) 523-2292 to pay for and schedule an appointment to take your exam.
3. Prepare for your exam, using this bulletin and materials from other sources. The content outlined in this guide are the basis for the exams. (See Page 5.)
4. Take the scheduled exam, bringing required identification to the test center. (See Page 3).

To Get Answers Not Provided in this Bulletin

For questions about certification:

**Commonwealth of Virginia
State Fire Marshal’s Office**
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23059-4500
Phone: (804) 371-0220
www.vafire.com

For questions about exams:

Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA)
P.O. Box 73570
Richmond, VA 23235-8042
Phone: (804) 523-2292
www.ccwatraining.org

REGISTERING FOR YOUR EXAM

To register for an exam, you must mail your completed exam registration form (on Page 6) to CCWA. CCWA will process your registration form and send you an approval letter informing you to call CCWA to schedule your exam appointment. This process usually takes 10 business days from the date CCWA receives your registration form.

Be sure to complete all information in the exam registration as incomplete, inaccurate or illegible forms will delay this process.

SCHEDULING AN EXAM APPOINTMENT

Once you receive your approval letter, you must call CCWA at (804) 523-2292 to schedule an appointment to take your exam and pay your exam fee. You may call between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday. Please have your Visa or MasterCard information available when you call. Exam registration fees **are not refundable or transferable**.

At the end of the call, you will be given a number confirming your appointment. Record and keep this information for your records.

Holidays. Testing will not be offered on Virginia state holidays.

Special consideration

- **ADA accommodations.** If you require testing accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), please call CCWA at (804) 523-2292 to obtain an accommodation request form. Reasonable testing accommodations are provided to allow candidates with documented disabilities recognized under ADA an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. You will need to submit professional documentation of your disability to help us determine the necessary testing arrangements. Thirty days advance notice is required for all special testing arrangements. There is no additional charge for these accommodations.

- **ESL note.** If English is your second language, please note that a language barrier is not considered a disability.

To avoid an additional exam fee, you must call CCWA at least **three full business days** (does not include weekends and holidays) before the day of your originally scheduled appointment.

Note: If you do not pass your exam, you must re-register with CCWA, pay another exam fee and schedule another exam appointment.

If absent or late for your appointment

If you miss your appointment or arrive late and are not allowed to test, your entire examination fee will be forfeited. You must then re-register with CCWA, pay **another full exam fee** and schedule a new appointment.

If you are unable to attend your scheduled exam due to illness or emergency, call CCWA. Under certain circumstances, the rescheduled fee may be waived. CCWA reserves the right to request documentation to support any illness or emergency claim.

Emergency closings

Severe weather or an emergency could require canceling scheduled exams. If this occurs, CCWA will attempt to contact you by phone or e-mail; however, you may check for test site closures by calling CCWA. If **any** respective test site is closed, your exam will be rescheduled without a rescheduling fee.

If a test center is open for testing and you choose not to appear for your appointment, you must re-register with CCWA, pay **another full exam fee** and schedule a new appointment.

TAKING YOUR EXAM

Your exam will be given by computer at a CCWA location. You do not need any computer experience or typing skill to take your exam. Before you start the exam, you will receive a personalized introduction to the testing system. You can also take an introductory lesson on the computer.

Scores are based on the number of questions answered correctly. You will not be given credit for

any question answered incorrectly or left blank. There is no penalty for guessing, so be sure to mark an answer for each question.

Arrival. You should arrive at least 30 minutes before your scheduled exam appointment. This allows time for you to sign in and for staff to verify your identification.

Identification required. You must present a valid form of identification before you can test. That identification document **must**:

- Be government-issued (e.g., driver’s license, state-issued identification card, military identification card or passport).
- Contain **both** a current photo (or a physical description) and your signature.
- Have a name that matches the name used to register for the exam (including designations such as “Jr.” and “III”).

IMPORTANT: Failure to provide appropriate identification at the time of the exam is considered a missed appointment.

If you cannot provide the identification listed above, contact CCWA before scheduling your appointment to arrange an alternative way to meet this requirement.

TEST CENTER REGULATIONS

To ensure that all candidates are tested under equally favorable conditions, the following regulations and procedures will be observed at each test center. Failure to follow any of these security procedures may result in disqualification of your examination. CCWA reserves the right to audiotape and videotape any examination session.

Permitted References

- The references listed in the content outlines are permitted to be used during the exam. (Newer editions of references may be used at your own risk, as they may or may not contain applicable information to the exam content).
- No handwritten or additional notes (letters, words, diagrams, etc.) are allowed in reference books. Any reference material that has been written in during the exam will be confiscated. Highlighting and permanent tabbing added before your arrival at the test center is acceptable.

Post-It notes are not considered permanent tabbing and will not be allowed.

- If you download and print the *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code*, it should be stapled or bound prior to bringing it to the test center. All rules listed in the previous paragraph apply to the fire code as well.
- Reference materials will be checked at the examination site before and after the examinations. Any reference material that has been written in during the exam will be confiscated.
- Sharing reference materials during the exam is not allowed.

Calculators

- Candidates may bring a silent, handheld, solar or battery-operated, nonprogrammable calculator (without paper tape-printing capabilities or alphabetic keypads) to use during the exam.

Personal Items

- We recommend that you avoid bringing personal items to the test center. Note the following:
 - Electronic equipment – cell phones, PDAs, pagers, cameras, tape recorders, laptops, etc. – is not permitted in the testing area.
 - Other personal items – digital watches, outerwear that is not being worn while testing (sweater, jacket, etc.), briefcases, purses, etc. – are not permitted in the testing room.

Breaks

- If you leave the testing room while an exam is in progress, you must sign out/in on the roster and you will lose exam time.
- You are not allowed to use any electronic devices or phones during breaks.

Visitors

- No guests, visitors or family members are allowed in the testing area.

Misconduct or disruptive behavior

- Candidates who engage in any kind of misconduct or disruptive or offensive behavior may be dismissed from the examination. Examples are: giving or receiving help, sharing supplies, taking part in an act of impersonation, removing test materials or notes from the testing room, using rude or offensive language and behavior that delays or interrupts testing.

Weapons

- Weapons are not allowed at the test center.

If questions arise. Testing center administrators are not allowed to answer any questions pertaining to the exam content. If you do not understand a question on the exam, you should answer the question to the best of your ability.

Copyrighted questions. All test questions are property of CCWA and are protected by copyright. Federal law provides severe civil and criminal penalties for the unauthorized reproduction, distribution, or exhibition of copyrighted materials.

YOUR EXAM RESULTS

At the end of your exam, your score will be shown on the screen and you will receive a printed score report. The report will indicate Pass or Fail. Exam results are confidential and will be revealed only to the applicant and the SFMO.

Passing score. A score of 75 percent or above is required to pass each exam. Once you pass your exam, you should contact the SFMO for information on completing the Application for Certification as a Blaster.

Retake information. If you do not pass the exam, you must complete the exam registration process again, including mailing another exam registration form to CCWA.

APPEALS PROCESS

Our goal is to provide a quality exam and a pleasant testing experience for every candidate. If you are dissatisfied with either and believe we can correct the problem, we would like to hear from you. We provide an opportunity for general comments at the end of your exam. Your comments will be reviewed by our personnel, but you will not receive a direct response.

If you are requesting a response about exam content, registration, scheduling or test administration (test site procedures, equipment, personnel, etc.), please submit an appeal in writing. Your appeal letter must provide your name and driver's license number, the exam title, the date you tested and the details of your concern, including all relevant facts. Be sure to include your signature and return address. Mail your appeal letter to:

Community College Workforce Alliance
ATTN: Appeals Committee
PO Box 73570
Richmond, VA 23235

The Appeals Committee will review your concern and send you a written response within 10 business days of receipt. Faxed appeals are not accepted because original signature is required.

EXAM CONTENT

The Virginia Restricted and Unrestricted Blaster exams are both open-book. They consist of multiple-choice questions with all questions weighted equally. You will have two (2) hours to complete the Restricted Exam and three (3) hours to complete the Unrestricted Exam. **A score of 75 percent or above is required to pass either exam.**

Virginia Restricted Blaster Exam Open Book, 40 questions, 2 hours

Scope – Any person engaging in the use of explosives or blasting agents utilizing five pounds (2.25 kg) or less per blasting operation and using instantaneous detonators.

Virginia Unrestricted Blaster Exam Open Book, 64 questions, 3 hours

Scope – Any person engaging in the use of explosives or blasting agents without limit to the amount of explosives or blasting agents or type of detonator.

References for Restricted & Unrestricted

The following materials were used to create exam questions and **are allowed** in the exam room.

1. "2012 SFPC for Explosives and Fireworks" found online and available as a download at: http://www.vafire.com/state_fire_marshall/explosives.htm under "Publications".
2. NFPA 495: Explosive Materials Code, 2010 Edition, National Fire Protection Association, 1 Batterymarch Park, P.O. Box 9101, Quincy, MA 02269-9101, <http://www.nfpa.org/>.
3. ISEE Blasters' Handbook, Eighteenth Edition, 2011, International Society of Explosives Engineers, The Blaster's Library, 30325 Bainbridge Road, Cleveland, OH 44139-2295

An extract version of the *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code* may be obtained online and downloaded from:

http://www.vafire.com/state_fire_marshall/explosives.htm

Under "Publications," click on the link titled "2012 SFPC for Explosives and Fireworks." Please be aware of the testing regulations on references found on Page 3 of this bulletin.

Note: You may use newer editions of references than are listed in the CIB. However, newer editions may or may not contain applicable information to the content on the exam. You assume the risk of using a more current reference than that listed in the CIB.



Virginia Restricted and Unrestricted Blaster exams Exam Registration Form

Print or type clearly and neatly. Incomplete or illegible forms will not be processed.

Candidate Information

Last Name		First Name	
Candidate's Birthdate		Candidate's Driver's License Number	
Company Name			
Street Address (including Apt. number or P.O. Box, if applicable)			
City		State	Zip
Daytime Phone Number (including area code)		Evening Phone Number (including area code)	
This is the first time I am taking this exam.		I am retaking this exam.	

Exam Selection

	Exam Selection	Exam Fee
	Virginia Restricted Blaster	\$100
	Virginia Unrestricted Blaster	\$150

Signature of Candidate

By signing this form, I understand that I am responsible for making sure all of the information provided is completely true and correct. I understand that if information given is not true, my registration status may be jeopardized or my test scores may be invalidated.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(Keep a copy of this registration form for your records.)

Mail this completed application to:

CCWA
ATTN: VA Blaster Program
P.O. Box 73570, Richmond, VA 23235

Upon receipt of the candidate's application and registration fee, CCWA will work with the candidate to assist in scheduling the exam on- or off-site.