Testing Organization and Proctor Guidelines

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Welcome to NATE Testing

North American Technician Excellence, Inc. (NATE) is an international non-profit testing and certification organization incorporated in 1997 for the purpose of recognizing and promoting technician excellence in the installation and service of heating, cooling, and refrigeration systems.

This manual explains NATE's policies and guidelines for scheduling and conducting exams and serves to familiarize testing organizations and proctors with their responsibilities.

Structure of Certification Exams

Testing organizations, proctors, and test candidates should refer to the Knowledge Areas of Technician Expertise (KATEs) to understand the scope of each certification.

NATE certification is awarded in the following three categories:

- Installation
- Service
- Senior

Core Exam

The Core Exam covers basic knowledge topics that all technicians should possess. For the specific categories and topics, please refer to the Core KATE. The KATEs are located online at www.natex.org, under "Technicians" and then "What Tests to Take/KATEs." To earn a certification in an installation or service specialty, a technician must pass both the Core and their specialty exam.

Specialty Exams

The specialty exams leading to certification are:

Installation and Service Specialties:

- Air Conditioning
- Air Distribution
- Air to Air Heat Pump
- Gas Furnaces
- Oil Furnaces

- Hydronics Gas
- Hydronics Oil
- Light Commercial Refrigeration
- Commercial Refrigeration

Senior Level Exam:

- HVAC Efficiency Analyst

Other Credentials:

- Ground Source Heat Pump Loop Installer* (given jointly with the International Ground Source Heat Pump Association)

*Does not require Core exam for certification.

Certifications for Technicians

The NATE certifications are tailored to the technician's knowledge and skill level. NATE's Knowledge Areas of Technician Expertise (KATEs) cover all knowledge, skills, and abilities the technician should possess.

Installation Technician

This technician primarily prepares the installation site (including removal of existing HVAC/R equipment), fabricates connections, and assembles systems as specified in the manufacturer's installation instructions. The technician must be able to properly power up and set control positions to cycle equipment through primary heating, cooling, and blower operation under on-site or off-site supervision of a service or senior technician. The installation technician takes specialized readings, such as temperatures, refrigerant circuit pressure, and basic electrical readings, with both operating and non-operating equipment, as may be required by others. NATE recommends technicians have one year of installation field experience before attempting a NATE installation specialty exam.

Service Technician

This technician must be able to accomplish the same tasks as an installation technician, as well as to independently power up and adjust control settings to cycle equipment through all designed-for sequences. A service technician must be able to acquire, evaluate, and interpret such readings as may be necessary to determine the adequacy and acceptability of system operation to meet specifications. This technician must be able to perform sufficient field diagnostic procedures as necessary to determine causes of inadequate performance and identify corrective actions as needed. Currently a service exam earns the technician an install certification

in the chosen specialty. NATE recommends technicians have two year of service field experience before attempting a NATE service specialty exam.

Note:

- **Technicians earning service certification are automatically awarded the corresponding installation certification.**
- **Technicians earning the Air to Air Heat Pump Service certification are automatically awarded the corresponding Air Conditioning certification.**

Senior Level Technician

This exam is designed for the highest level technician. This exam is not intended for the HVAC system designer, sales force, or the engineering community. This exam is also open resource. Please see the opening page of the Senior Level Efficiency Analyst KATE for the list of accepted resources.

NATE requires that a technician holds at least two NATE service specialty certifications prior to sitting for this exam. One must be in a cooling specialty and one in a heating specialty. Also, NATE recommends technicians have five years of service field experience before attempting the Senior Level Efficiency Analyst technician.

The Role of Testing Organizations

A Testing Organization (TO) is an organization that has been approved by NATE to participate in and offer support to the NATE HVAC/R technician certification program by hosting testing sessions for candidates. Testing Organizations are the cornerstone of the NATE program; they are NATE's "face" to the technician population. Testing Organizations are responsible for safeguarding the integrity of the NATE exams by abiding to all guidelines. HVAC/R installation or service contractors cannot become testing organizations.

The Testing Organization Application is available on NATE's website. After being approved as a Testing Organization, you will be listed on NATE's website (www.natex.org) under the "Find a Testing Organization" function.

All Testing Organizations are required to have at least one NATE approved proctor before they are listed on the website and able to order exam materials or create online exam sessions. Only NATE approved proctors may receive exam materials, create online sessions, and proctor the NATE exam. All Proctor ID numbers and passwords are individually assigned and may not be used by anyone else. Violation of this policy may result in revocation of the testing privileges of both the testing organization and proctors.

Setting Exams Fees

Each Testing Organization (TO) sets its own price for the exams and is responsible for collecting payment. Current pricing from NATE is on the Testing Organization and Proctor opening page on www.myNATE.org. A suggested vendor price for the exams is listed below and is also listed on the opening page of the KATEs and the front cover of each exam.

Core: $240

Specialty: $240

Efficiency Analyst: $300

Ground Source Heat Pump: $190

If test fees are not enclosed in the Test Packet, it is at NATE's discretion whether test results will be released until payment is received.

The Role of Proctors

Proctors have the responsibility for running the actual exam session. A proctor is responsible for receiving and distributing unopened exam packets, exam security, delivering the exam material to the exam site, managing the site arrangements, instructing candidates prior to the exam session, reading the proctor script during the session, and monitoring site activity during the session to make sure all candidates are tested fairly.

Proctor Application

NATE reviews and approves all proctor applications. Proctors must be personnel from an approved NATE Testing Organization. Proctors are not required to have knowledge of the HVAC/R industry or hold a NATE certification. Proctor application forms are available online at www.natex.org and attached to these guidelines.

Proctors must agree to abide by the policies and procedures listed in this guide, as well as any new policies and procedures NATE may implement.

Proctors can expect to be audited by NATE representatives. Proctors found deficient in carrying out their duties will be so advised according to the Revocation and Suspension Guidelines in this guide.

Proctor Selection

The proctor must be a disinterested party. This is defined as someone who:

- Is not relative of any candidate in the testing session;
- Will not receive direct financial gain from the outcome of the testing;
- Has not personally trained any candidates in their testing session;
- Does not instruct courses specifically designed to prepare candidates for the NATE exams.

Number of Proctors

One proctor is required for every 35 candidates in a room. You will need additional proctors if there are more than 35 candidates registered for a testing session, or if more than one room is used for a testing. A proctor must be in the room with candidates testing at all times.

In the event a testing session requires multiple proctors, one proctor should be designated as the primary proctor with overall responsibility for the testing session. This proctor should complete the Test Session Audit Form when returning the exams.

Scheduling a Test Session

Testing organizations and proctors set their own testing schedule. To list a scheduled test session on the NATE website, go to the Test Session link of either Proctor or Testing Organization section on the myNATE site. You will receive a confirmation that your scheduled session has been received and the test date will appear on the Testing Organization Search on www.natex.org. Please note this only schedules the session to appear on the website and does not create an online session or place an order for paper exams.

Candidate Registration

Each testing organization or proctor should establish their own procedures for registering candidates for their sessions.

The following is some basic information that each candidate should receive prior to the testing session:

- Where
- When
- How long the testing session will be
- Who is running the testing session and their contact information
- What is the cost to the technician
- How does the technician pay the testing organization for the session
- What to bring (Photo ID required, non programmable calculator, #2 pencil)
- What is not allowed in the testing area (e.g. cell phones)

Ordering Exams

Paper Exams

To order paper exams, log in at www.myNATE.org and select "Paper Exam Orders" link under either the Testing Organization or Proctor sections. Clicking this link will display all previous paper exams orders placed by your account. To place a new order, click "Create New Order". Any extra shipping charges or rush fees will be displayed when a Testing Organization or Proctor selects which date they would like the exams delivered by.

Online Exams

To create an online exam session, log into www.myNATE.org and select "Online Testing" link under the Proctor section. Clicking this link will display all previous online exam session conducted by your account. To schedule a new online session click "Create New Online Session." Once created, a four digit online code will be assigned. The proctor can use this code on www.myNATE.org. under the online testing tab. The proctor does not need to pre-register candidates or indicate which exams they will be taking in this session. Candidates select which exams they will be taking after they have logged into the session. **Please note that this tab is only accessible if no one is currently logged into myNATE. The candidate will log in to myNATE after the proctor has entered their proctor ID and online session code.**

Test Session Times

Test session times for each exam are listed below. These times must be adhered to at all times. Test session start and stop times need to be noted on the Test Session Audit Form which is returned with exams.

Proctors need to enforce the time limits on online exams. The online test system will not automatically cut off candidates. Timing on online sessions will be automatically tracked by NATE.

Testing organizations and proctors may hold more than one test session in a single day. Simply indicate on the Test Session Scheduling Form the times for all session scheduled for a particular day.

- Core Exams: 1 ½ hours.
- Installation or Service Specialty Exams: 2 ½ hours
- Senior Level Efficiency Analyst: 4 hours
- Ground Source Heat Pump Loop Installer: 4 hours

Allow additional time prior to the test session for check in, any onsite registrations, and reading the proctor script.

Test Session Locations

Testing can be done at a testing organization's facility, or at an off-site location. Testing organizations are required to provide a controlled quiet environment so candidates are not distracted or disrupted, and exam security is maintained. There should be 36 inches of space between each candidate. The location will be noted on the Test Session Audit Form.

Receipt of Test Materials

The designated proctor will receive a packet of exams and materials from NATE before the scheduled test session. This will contain the proctor packet plus all of the exam materials needed by examinees, except non-programmable calculators and pencils.

Your proctor packet contains:

- A checklist to use before and during the testing session;
- The Proctor Script which must be read aloud to the candidates during the session;
- Extra envelopes to secure the return of all exams;
- Extra answer cards;
- Extra Test Surveys;
- Extra labels to seal candidate envelopes;
- Test Session Audit From to be completed and returned with the exams;
- Proctor packet return envelope for extra materials and the Test Session Audit Form.

Please verify that the number of exams you received matches the order you placed. **However, do not open the sealed exam booklets.**

If your proctor packet is incomplete or you did not receive correct exam types or number of exams ordered, please contact NATE at 877-420-6283 prior to your scheduled test session.

Exam Security

As a NATE proctor, it is your responsibility to ensure the security of the exam materials at all times. Exams materials will be sent to your in advance of the actual testing session. Please keep the materials in a secure place. No one except the proctor is allowed to handle the exam materials. During the session, be sure to keep materials secured during any breaks or in your personal possession. **A proctor must not open any of the sealed exam booklets prior to the session.**

Maintain Control of the Test Session

A proctor must establish and maintain control of the test session form the time you greet the candidates and check their photo ID, until the time you gather the completed exams. As a proctor, you will need to handle problems and distractions quietly and quickly.

Explaining Exam Procedures to Candidates

Proctors must read and adhere to the Proctor Script during the test session. Please familiarize yourself with the Proctor Script prior to the test session. The Proctor Script should be read as written. This ensures that all candidates receive the same information. Each candidate receives only one exam at a time. When the candidate is finished with that exam, the proctor will check to make sure all of the questions were answered and the candidate has completed and signed the answer card correctly. **All material including the original envelope and scrap paper are put inside the return envelope by the candidate in front of the proctor. The exam is sealed by the candidate, and then the proctor and the candidate sign the barcode label used to seal the envelope flap**.

Returning Exam Materials

Prior to packaging the return exam envelopes, the proctor must complete the Test Session Audit Form. This form is where the proctor can document the test date, exam start times, exam end times, exams received, distributed, used, and unused. This form is also where the proctor can note and unusual or noteworthy incidents that occurred during the session. At the end of test session all used and unused exams from the same order must be returned to VGI by a tracked shipping method within 48 hours of the test session. Testing organizations and proctors are not

charged for unused exams. Test sessions will not be processed and placed on hold when received if any of the following occurs:

- No Test Session Audit Form is returned with the exams from the session;
- Test Session Audit From was returned, but is missing information;
- Not all exams from used test order(s) were returned;
- Any other exam irregularities (missing barcode seals, answer cards with blank candidate information etc.)

At the end of test session all used and unused exams from the same order must be returned to VGI by a tracked shipping method within 48 hours of the test session.

Exam Results

Please remind candidates that they can access their exam results for paper exams online approximately *two weeks* after testing on www.myNATE.org, if they provided a PIN number on their paper exam answer card. Results are also mailed to the home address the candidate provides on their answer card.

Online results will be fully processed within a maximum of five business days from when the online session was closed. Candidates will use the same myNATE username and password combination they used to take the exam to access their results.

Appeals

A candidate may request redress for issues concerning their certification status including but not limited to:

- Exam results;
- Denial of certification and/or recertification;
- Redress for continuing education hours.

Please refer to any candidate interested in requesting an appeal to the Candidate Handbook (available on www.natex.org) for the detailed procedure for submitting their appeal.

Complaints

Complaints about testing organizations, proctors, certified technicians and/or the contractors who employ those certified technicians may be submitted to NATE. Compaints must be submitted to

NATE in writing for review. The party that is the subject of the complaint is given an opportunity to answer the complaint. After reviewing all of the information from both parties, NATE makes a decision based on evidence presented and the request received. The decision can be:

- No action taken;
- Removal or suspension of a certification;
- Removal or suspension of a testing organization;
- Removal or suspension of a proctor;
- Removal or suspension of a contractor for the NATE C-3 listing.

ADA Accommodations

Testing organizations must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (amended 1991), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (amended 1990). If candidates have special needs, they must fill out the Request for Non-Standard Test Accommodations Form, and submit it to NATE at least 45 days before the test session is to be scheduled. This will allow the NATE staff time to notify the testing organization and proctor of the required accommodation(s) and to ensure the accommodations are available. NATE will consult with the testing organization as the best way to meet the needs of the candidate. The form is available online at www.natex.org.

Certification Maintenance

NATE certification is valid for two (2) years. At the end of a technician's certification cycle, they can maintain their certification by using one of two methods. The first method is by re-testing. A technician can maintain their certification by re-taking the specialty exam for their expiring specialty certification. The second method is by using continuing education hours (CEHs). A technician would need to have completed 16 hours of continuing education during the two years of their certification. The technician would then need to submit a certification maintenance application, maintenance fee, and any documentation of CEHs not already tracked by NATE. The maintenance fee is $25 for the first specialty, and then $5 for each additional specialty.

NATE Policy for Suspension or Revocation of a Testing Organization or Proctor

Violations of the published policy and procedures can result in NATE taking action to suspend or revoke a testing organization or proctor In the even NATE receives a request for the suspension or revocation of a proctor or NATE finds cause for action (through data forensics or other methods of monitoring the integrity of exams), NATE will follow the following process:

1. NATE will generate or require a formal written request for suspension and/or revocation. The request must contain an original signature from the complainant. The request must detail the reasons for the request and cite the published policy or procedure violated as the cause for the request. The request must be address to or generated by the Director of Certification.
2. NATE will review and acknowledge receipt of the request or send the violation generated to the testing organization and/or proctor within 30 days of receipt.
3. NATE will inform the proctor in writing the nature of the violation and allow the testing organization and/or proctor 30 days to respond in writing to the request.
4. Copies of all written communication will be provided to the testing organization and/or proctor as well as the complainant that initiated the request.
5. If the testing organization and/or proctor does not respond within the allotted time frame, the testing organization and/or proctor will automatically be suspended/revoked per the requested complaint. The proctor and the complainant will be notified in writing of the suspension/revocation.
6. If the testing organization and/or proctor provides a response within the allotted time frame, NATE will review the response and provide copies to the complainant that initiated the request.
7. NATE will establish a subcommittee of the NATE Techncial Committee to review the suspension/revocation requests. The subcommittee will be comprised of at least 6 active Technical Committee and the Director of Certification. The committee will review documents sent electronically. No individual on the subcommittee will reside or provide services to consumers in the same geographic area in which a party to the process resides or provides services to consumers.
8. The decision to suspend/revoke the proctor will be made by the Technical Committee Subcommittee based solely on the written response of the testing organization and/or proctor, the written information supplied by the complainant and review of the Testing Organization and Proctor Policies and Procedures.
9. The decision rendered by the Technical Committee Subcommittee will be provided in writing to the testing organization and/or proctor as well as the complainant within 30 days of receiving a response from the testing organization and/or proctor. The decision by the Technical Committee Subcommittee will be considered final unless the testing organization and/or proctor appeals as shown below.

10. The decision may be appealed to the full Technical Committee at a regular scheduled committee meeting. Full Technical Committee meetings are held twice a year in the winter and summer. Any decision rendered by the full technical committee will be provided in writing to the testing organization and/or proctor as well as the complainant within 30 days for the decision made at the regularly scheduled Technical Committee meeting. The complainant and testing organization/proctor may appear at the Technical Committee meeting, at their own expense.
11. The decision, if required, by the Technical Committee may be appealed on procedural ground only to the full NATE Board of Trustees at regularly scheduled NATE Board of Trustees Meeting. The Board of Trustees will not review the reason for the suspension/revocation. Full Board of Trustees meetings are held twice a year in the spring and fall. Any decision rendered by the full NATE Board of trustees will be considered final and will be provided in writing to the testing organization and/or proctor as well as the complainant within 30 days of the decision being made. The complainant and the testing organization/proctor may appear at the Board of Trustees Meeting, at their own expense.