



Accreditation in Tennessee

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Reference Number: MTAS-361

As previously stated, the Alcoa, Brentwood, Bristol, Kingsport, and Maryville Fire Departments are currently accredited. In addition to these municipal agencies, Naval Support Activity Mid-South (a DoD fire department) in Millington is an accredited agency. Clarksville, Germantown, Johnson City, Murfreesboro, and Pigeon Forge are registered agencies. These fire departments have established the path for other fire departments to follow.

In May 2006, the Maryville Fire Department hosted the first CFAI training for fire accreditation class conducted in Tennessee. In the past, anyone from Tennessee who wanted to take the courses had to travel outside the state. Each of the three courses are one day each and were offered for three consecutive days. Martel Thompson, a retired fire chief from Henderson, Nev., led the Maryville course. Students in the class came from as far away as Alaska, Illinois, Ohio and Georgia.

The first course is a one-day session about the self-assessment process and serves as an introduction to the accreditation program and its benefits. The focus is on determining how good your fire department is, how you measure it for credibility, and how you prove it. This class and process focus on measuring success rather than failure. One example is about how a fire service measured itself by determining the amount of fire loss in a given community. A better measurement in this case would be the amount of property saved rather than the amount lost.

Day two of the series is on the standards of coverage and covers the primary functions of eight strategic planning components: deployment, risk identification, service levels, distribution, concentration, reliability, performance, and overall evaluation. The assessment process requires the fire department to develop a standard of coverage document that analyzes response factors and to set a standard for the local community. This process alone provides a tremendous amount of valuable information to be used in the future growth of the city and fire department.

Day three of the series includes training on becoming a peer assessor. Peer assessors are a key element of accreditation and are the foundation for improvement. Anyone with experience can become a peer assessor after training. Peer assessors are not paid and actually perform an incredible amount of work during the peer assessment process. Peer assessors are not allowed to review fire departments within their own state, but they do assess fire departments of similar size and makeup to their own.

The Maryville classes had 35 attendees with most of them representing Tennessee fire departments. This was a great opportunity, and we hope to see future courses sponsored in Tennessee.

In summary, successful completion of the evaluation process will enhance training, quality of service, and information available to fire and emergency service agencies and personnel.

Self-assessment has many benefits. It allows agencies to accurately evaluate their departments and identify strengths and weaknesses. It provides them with a method to address deficiencies and encourages quality improvement through continuous self-assessment. There are many examples in which agencies were able to justify the need for additional equipment, work force, or services using the self-assessment process. Ultimately, self-assessment ensures that agencies are meeting the needs of their communities.

Many city managers have already heard about this process through ICMA, and with additional information and courses being held in Tennessee, it is expected that there will be more Tennessee fire departments achieving registered agency status. The cost of the registration and courses may seem expensive, but the return on the investment will be incredible.

For more information from CFAI, contact:

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Links:

[1] <http://www.cpse.org/>

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Source URL (retrieved on 07/09/2020 - 5:22am): <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/accreditation-tennessee>



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