

October 28, 2014

TO: Certified Municipal Finance Officers (CMFOs), Certified County Finance Officers (CCFOs), Certified Tax Collectors (CTCs), Certified Public Works Managers (CPWMs), Registered Municipal Clerks (RMCs), and Qualified Purchasing Agents (QPAs)

FROM: Thomas H. Neff, Director
Division of Local Government Services

SUBJECT: Revised Renewal Forms/Certification Renewal Issues
(Previously issued July 7, 2014, this issue contains slight revisions)

Use of Revised Forms

Record of Continuing Education/Certification Renewal forms (Renewal form) can be accessed at the Professional Certification page of the Division's website at the link, <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dlgs/programs/certification.html#5>. The revised forms have been available for some time now, and many licensees have utilized them. You will note that the form now asks for an address/email of record, as opposed to asking for a home address. The reason for this is that the address/email of record may be made available to the public, whereas a home address is excluded as public information. The forms can be completed, and then downloaded, signed, and mailed, along with any applicable fees.

It is important to note that if you do not want your home address/email to be listed as your address/email of record, you must provide an alternate address/email (normally the alternative is your work address/email). In addition, your address of record must include a street number and address. It is equally important that you keep Division staff apprised of any changes to your address/email of record.

Although the Division is still accepting previous versions of the Renewal form at this time, as of January 1, 2015, previous versions will not be accepted, and will be returned to licensees for completion of the current form.

Licensee Responsibilities Regarding Certification Renewals

The Division does not send out any reminders as to when you are due to renew your certification. All licensees are responsible to know when their certification is due for renewal, for tracking completion of their continuing education contact hours, and for keeping a file of their proof of completion of courses. The Division does not maintain any files of proofs of completion of your courses. **You are strongly urged to maintain some form of backup file of your proofs of attendance.**

You cannot "skip" a renewal cycle and maintain your certification. There is no provision in the statutes for allowing this. In order to maintain your certification, you must obtain the requisite number of contact hours during each renewal cycle.

If after submission of your Renewal form, at least two months have passed, and you have not received your renewal certificate, or have not otherwise been contacted by Division staff concerning your renewal status, please contact the Certification Unit at (609) 292-9757, or at Daniel.Kaminski@dca.nj.gov, to inquire as to whether your renewal was received, and the status.

Other Renewal Issues; Errors/Omissions of Information and/or Fees

In addition to the need to begin using the current form, there are a number of errors/omissions which Division staff has encountered in processing renewal forms, and these are noted below. These errors/omissions cause delays in the renewal process, and licensees are encouraged to carefully review their renewals before submitting them to reduce such delays.

Missing Information

Renewals have been received with incomplete addresses, missing signatures, etc. Each of the Renewal forms is two pages. In addition to a listing of the courses, the first page requests your current contact information. The second page includes the signature line certifying that you have attended the courses you claim in the Renewal form. Staff has received submittals in the mail containing only page one or page two of a form.

Incorrect Renewal Forms

In 2005, the Ethics category was introduced as a subject area for licensees to obtain credits, and a column to list the dates of the courses attended was also added to the Renewal forms. Staff is still receiving some Renewal forms from prior to 2005 that have no column for the Ethics category (in most of these cases, the column has been handwritten in by the licensee), and no column for the date of the courses.

Some licensees have created a Renewal form modeled after the Division's Renewal forms, in an Excel or other format. This is acceptable. However, such forms must contain at least the same information requested on the Division's forms, including columns for the Division-issued course number, the date of the course, the name of the course, the sponsor of the course, and columns for the various subject areas. Individually created forms that do not include all the required information will be returned to licensees for completion of the missing information.

Renewals Missing Payment

All certifications require a \$50 renewal fee, except for the QPA certification, which now has a renewal fee of \$35, as per amended rules of October 20, 2014. Staff has received Renewal forms unaccompanied by a fee. It is permissible to include a purchase order (P.O.) with the Renewal form. However, the renewal will not be processed until the actual fee is received. Staff makes every effort to sign off on P.O.s and in returning them promptly for payment.

Additionally, it is important that when payment is returned on a P.O. that there is some notification included as to what the payment is for, so that it can be easily matched to a licensee's Renewal form.

Finally, it is preferable to include either the payment or P.O. with the actual Renewal form, as sending them separately can cause delays in the processing of the renewal.

Out of Cycle Courses

Licenses are reminded that you cannot utilize courses and contact hours that were obtained in a previous renewal cycle toward the current renewal of your certification, **regardless of whether those courses were included with your previous renewal.** For example, using a two-year renewal cycle that runs from December 31, 2014, to December 31, 2016, no hours obtained prior to December 31, 2014, can count toward this renewal cycle.

In the above example, the problem will be that if such hours that do not count are included on the Renewal form, the necessary hours may then be lacking in the total hours required for renewal of the certification. There have been licensees who have done this, and, as a result, their certification lapsed, requiring them to apply for a new certificate – that is, having to apply to participate in a certification exam again. Therefore, please be mindful of the dates of the courses that are included on your Renewal form.

Six Month Grace Periods/Late Fees

All of the certifications administered by the Division have a statutory six month grace period in order to renew. Therefore, again using the above example, if you are due to renew your certification as of December 31, 2014, but are short on the required hours, you may still utilize the next six months through June 30, 2015, to obtain the hours and submit your Renewal form. **Continuing with this example, hours obtained during the grace period of December 31, 2014 - June 30, 2015, that are needed for the renewal that was due December 31, 2014, cannot also be utilized toward the next renewal cycle of December 31, 2014 – December 31, 2016. Any hours obtained during the grace period above those that are needed for the renewal that was due December 31, 2014, can be utilized toward the next renewal cycle.** These grace periods are automatic in the statutes; you are not required to first obtain approval from the Division to utilize the grace period.

However, three of the certifications that are administered, **CTC, RMC, and CPWM**, require a \$50 statutory late fee to be included if the Renewal form is submitted during the grace period. This requirement is noted on these three Renewal forms.

The Division utilizes the postmark date on a renewal submission to determine if it has been submitted timely. For example, if you hold one of the above three certifications and you are required to renew as of December 31, 2014, and your renewal is received postmarked by any date after December 31, it is considered a late submission. If you have not already included the statutory late fee with such renewal, the Division will mail you a form letter notifying you of the requirement for the late fee. Your renewal will not be processed until the late fee is received.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and for your cooperation in submitting your certification Renewal form. Carefully checking your Renewal form for any such errors or omissions before submitting it will help in reducing the time needed for Division staff to process your certification renewal. Please contact the Division's Certification Unit at the telephone number or email address noted above if you have any questions in regard to these matters.