Missouri Division of Fire Safety Automates Certification Testing to Cut Costs and Save Time

The Customer

Missouri Division of Fire Safety

> **"Our Missouri first responders now have a direct and efficient connection to our training unit staff, along with direct access to their training records. This a win-win in our book!"**

J. Tim Bean
State Fire Marshal, Missouri Division of Fire Safety

The Challenge

Missouri's Division of Fire Safety Training and Certification Unit develops, delivers, and oversees training in the state.

The agency approves the certification course content and delivery provided by departments and academies throughout Missouri. The agency is responsible for all state certifications—administering approximately 5,000 certification exams a year. Although certification is not mandatory, the Division of Fire Safety monitors approximately 500 in-person classes (10,000 students) per year, and approved the first delivery of hybrid classes of in-seat and online students in 2017.

Local fire departments must also register with the state to take advantage of the training and certification services offered by the Division of Fire Safety.

Of the **890** total departments in the state, **more than half** are registered.

70-80%
have registered

Before Acadis®, one of the unit's five staff members would need to be onsite to proctor at each test location. This often led to 16-hour days on the road and significant overtime expenses

for the agency. Moreover, while traveling and proctoring, the staff had less time to focus on other crucial job responsibilities.

Additionally, the unit's operations were scattered across a paper system, an Access database, Excel spreadsheets, and testing software. Quickly locating records in the unit's paper archives was particularly challenging at times

"We wanted our process to be more efficient so that staff members could focus elsewhere," said Greg Landwehr, Deputy Chief of Training and Certification. "We needed to reduce doing office work to focus more on performing the evaluations we are mandated to do."

The Choice

The Deputy Chief of Training and Certification had made it her mission to get the unit a better solution before retirement. "Our vision was to have a complete management system for our testing, records, and certifications," said Landwehr. At the same time, the unit's stakeholders (fire chiefs, training officers, instructors and first responders) were also pushing for an online testing solution.

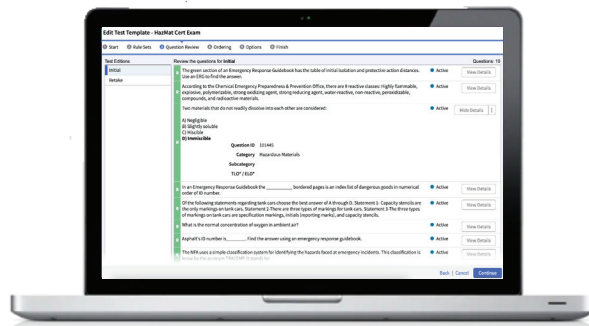The software that matched their vision was the Acadis Readiness Suite.

ACADIS®

With training and document management, automated testing, compliance features, an LMS, online registration, and more, Acadis covered all of the unit's operations. The unit had found its solution, but funding it was another matter as "Our stakeholders at the time had to be educated on why we needed more than just online testing," said Landwehr.

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>
> **Greg Landwehr**
> *Deputy Chief of Training and Certification*

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Trapani and the unit continued reviewing software tools. However, the team could not find another solution that would meet their needs for a complete package. "We didn't want to duplicate our work and if we had only purchased an online testing tool, we would still have to manually take those records and move them back into another system," said Landwehr.

Luckily, FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program offered a high priority for LMS systems. Missouri Division of Fire Safety was awarded a grant and able to apply the funding toward the purchase of Acadis. "We were a state agency that could take a business plan and project to the IT department with funding already in place," said Landwehr. "A lot of the red tape went away."

The Change

The team knew that the sooner they could replace their old systems, the better off their unit and Missouri's fire service would be. They also knew that it was critical to deeply understand their data processes and lay the proper foundation. To that end, the unit took advantage of Acadis' RapidStart program, where implementation experts come onsite to facilitate configuration and administrator training.

With the help of the Acadis team, Landwehr and another staff member fully dedicated themselves to getting the system up and running. "We actually beat our implementation deadline by two weeks, even our IT people couldn't believe how fast we did it," said Landwehr.

The Missouri Division of Fire Safety proved that the right team matched with the right purpose-built system can save a tremendous amount of time.

> "We would show the Acadis team our exact processes, and they would show us three different ways to make it work within the system.
>
> This customer support was important and vital to a successful system launch on August 1, 2021."
>
> **Greg Landwehr**
> *Deputy Chief of Training and Certification*

The team *expected that it would take **four months*** to convert and import their 9,500+ question test bank. To their delight, it took them ***less than a week***.

The Results

In addition to the time saved during implementation, Acadis has also saved the Missouri Division of Fire Safety more time in ongoing processes, such as:.

BEFORE		AFTER
10-15 min	Certification Processing	less than a minute
2 months	Testing Start Times	2 weeks
Paper	Printing Costs	Email

Acadis also saved the state money and helped reduce staff overtime pay. Without long hours on the road and less time spent on data entry, the unit can accomplish most of its responsibilities within regular work hours.

"Missouri changed for a purpose, and it's made all the difference." The Missouri Division of Fire Safety's dedication to adopting powerful, purpose-built software will continue to benefit their staff, stakeholders, and state.

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