Asphalt Plant
Level I & Level II
Certification Study Guide
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# Virginia Department of Transportation

## Asphalt Concrete Plant Level I & II Certification School Agenda

### Day One – Level I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Registration/Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00-8:30</td>
<td>Introduction - Chapter 1</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project Communication &amp; Safety - Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:30</td>
<td>Components of Asphalt Concrete - Chapter 3</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-11:30</td>
<td>Asphalt Concrete Mixtures - Chapter 4</td>
<td>Todd Rorrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-2:30</td>
<td>Asphalt Concrete Plants - Chapter 5</td>
<td>Todd Rorrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45-4:30</td>
<td>Sampling &amp; Sieve Analysis of Aggregates - Chapter 6</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day Two – Level II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-10:15</td>
<td>Blending Aggregates - Chapter 7</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:30</td>
<td>Duties of the Technicians - Chapter 8</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-4:30</td>
<td>Testing of Asphalt Concrete Mixtures - Chapter 9</td>
<td>Todd Rorrer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lab Demonstrations</td>
<td>Ben Carter &amp; Jennifer Adkins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Day Three – Level II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:30</td>
<td>Quality Acceptance &amp; Data Processing - Chapter 10</td>
<td>Angela Beyke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-11:30</td>
<td>OPEN review or start exam early)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-4:30</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Introduction

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Acknowledgements

The writers of this study guide would like to express their appreciation to the Asphalt Institute for their permission to use quotations, graphs, and illustrations from the “Asphalt Technology and Construction Guide” and the Virginia Asphalt Association, Inc., for technical data and slides used in the schools.

The writers are also grateful for to the Barber-Green Company and the Iowa Manufacturing Company for the use of their illustrations and information. Appreciation is extended to The National Lime Association for their permission to use quotations on Lime Safety from the “Lime Stabilization Construction Manual,” Bulletin 326.

The Certification School personnel would also like to express their gratitude to everyone in the Department who gave of their time and talents in the preparation of this manual. Other references used in the preparation of this guide are listed below.

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). www.transportation.org


Muench, S. Basic Components of a Batch Plant graphic, Basic Components of a Drum Plant graphic, Flexible Pavement Structure graphic.


---

**IMPORTANT**

This manual is a practical guide and not to be used as a source for VDOT specifications.

Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure. May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.
Preface

This training guide covers asphalt components and properties, mixtures, plants and production, common problems, technician duties and testing/quality assurance processes. The guide’s audience is the plant personnel who are responsible for these operations—both contractor personnel who do the work, and agency personnel who oversee and inspect the work. This training program has been designed to enable the following audiences to achieve specific outcomes and certifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Role</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Certification Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VDOT Personnel</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Asphalt Plant Technician  | Through inspection processes, ensure asphalt production facilities are capable of producing the level of quality product required for specifications of the VDOT job while being compliant with CFR 737.                                                                                                                                    | • Level I  
  • Level II                                               |
| Asphalt Laboratory Technician | Ensures that quality assurance (QA) testing on the asphalt components and products meet specifications of VDOT job and supports compliance measures with CFR 637.                                                                                                                                   | • Level I  
  • Level II                                               |
| QA Manager                | Management and supervision of the two previous job roles to ensure their outcomes are produced consistently over time, and without error                                                                                                                                                                                                 | • Level I  
  • Level II                                               |
| **Industry Personnel**    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                          |
| Mix Design Technician     | Quality mixes that are designed and produced at plant to meet VDOT contract specifications and CFR 637 requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                              | • Level I  
  • Level II  
  • Asphalt Plant Mix Design                                |
| Plant Technician          | Ensures the quality of the materials produced in plant meet mix design requirements for VDOT job and are compliant with CFR 637                                                                                                                                                                                                     | • Level I                                               |
| Plant Operator            | Oversees and ensures plant operations meet the mix designs to VDOT contract specifications and CRF 637 requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                               | • No VDOT Certification Required                         |
| Loader Operator           | Ensures components of the job mix are introduced properly into the mix                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | • No VDOT Certification Required                         |
| QC Manager                | Ensures that the outcomes of the previous four (Industry) jobs consistently meet or exceed the customer (VDOT) requirements, while being compliant with CFR 637                                                                                                                                 | • No VDOT Certification Required                         |

**Figure 1-1. Outcome and Certification Level by Job Role to be achieved through Training Workshop**
Introduction

The course will provide each technician with an understanding of his/her role in the overall pavement performance and a working knowledge of the techniques and processes used to safely select, mix, produce, and test asphalt to specifications. Likewise, course attendees will have an understanding of improper preparation of materials, their adverse effect, and ultimately the behavior and resulting problem in the finished product. As plant experts, we understand that equipping the technician with this information will give him/her the confidence to make proper day-to-day decisions and will ensure that good quality control is maintained throughout to the end product.

We hope this guide and the course it accompanies will promote a common understanding of the processes involved and thereby result in improved asphalt-concrete production.
Asphalt Plant Certification Information

Listed below are the different certifications related to asphalt-concrete production (Plant Level I, Plant Level II), a brief statement of course coverage, the certification components or requirements related to each level, and the course prerequisites related to each course. Please note: A technician may be certified as any one or more of these, or possibly all of these. Some certifications require a lower level certification before advancement to the next level of certification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certification &amp; Course</th>
<th>Certification Components</th>
<th>Prerequisites for Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plant Level I</strong></td>
<td><em>Written Exam</em> -</td>
<td>▪ No Pre-Req.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Coverage:</td>
<td>▪ Before taking the exam you must show photo identification and sign the Technician Certification Application.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of VDOT</td>
<td>▪ You must pass with a minimum score of 70% and have one opportunity for re-testing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asphalt Specifications and Test Methods. Knowledge of Asphalt mixtures and sampling.</td>
<td><em>Proficiency Exam</em> -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Before taking the exam you must show photo identification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ You have one opportunity for re-testing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passing the written and proficiency exam results in an Asphalt Plant Level I Certification.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Plant Level II**     | *Written Exam* -                                                                         | Plant Level I             |
| Course Coverage:       | ▪ Before taking the exam you must show photo identification and sign the Technician Certification Application. |                           |
| Awareness of VDOT      | ▪ You must pass with a minimum score of 70% and have one opportunity for re-testing.     |                           |
| Asphalt specifications and test methods. | *Proficiency Exam* -                                                                   |                           |
|                        | ▪ Before taking the exam you must show photo identification                              |                           |
|                        | ▪ You have one opportunity for re-testing.                                               |                           |
|                        | Passing the written and proficiency exam results in an Asphalt Plant Level II Certification. |                           |

**Figure 1-2. Certifications and Pre-Requisites related to Asphalt-Concrete, Plant Production**

Upon satisfactory completion of all requirements, the technician will be issued a certificate/certification of Plant proficiency. A certificate will be issued for each type certification. Initial certification will be effective for five (5) years beginning from the year of passing the appropriate written exam.

Failure of an exam or proficiency test will require the person to re-attend the instructor-led class and pass the exam and proficiency if required to become certified.
### TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Your test results and card may be found at the VDOT University website listed below.

- VDOT Employees: https://virtualcampus.vdot.virginia.gov
- All other students: https://virtualcampus.vdot.virginia.gov/external

If you are enrolled in this class or hold any VDOT Materials certifications, do not register as a new user when you go to this site.

- If you do not know your logon or password, call (804) 328-3158.DOT Employees: https://virtualcampus.vdot.virginia.gov
- All other students: https://virtualcampus.vdot.virginia.gov/external

*Describes what tools, equipment and tests are required to complete the job safely and with the highest level of quality.*
About This Guide

This guide was designed using several techniques to improve learning and retention.

Each chapter in the guide begins with a brief introduction and a listing of learning objectives related to the chapter. Please review these objectives before beginning the chapter. This will help you develop a mental context and a set of expectations for chapter content, preparing you for more effective learning.

Within the chapters you will find a variety of techniques being used to improve learning, depending on the chapter content and type of information being conveyed. Some of these include:

- Step-by-step procedures and photos directing “how to” activity
- Decision tables for “if-then” situations
- Graphics to provide context and additional information
- Step-by-step examples for completing sample problems
- Worksheets to guide procedural calculations and a reference section of formulas used in calculations (Chapter 10).

Chapters 3-10 end with a Knowledge Check section intended to prepare you for the certification exam. Answers to these Knowledge Checks are included in Appendix F for your reference, enabling you to check your learning.

This guide also uses various visual cues to symbolize several consistent concepts throughout the chapters. These are highlighted because they contain foundational knowledge or other information that is critical for you to understand. Below and on the next page you will see the visual cues used, as well as a description of each.

### DEFINITION

A definition will be provided.

Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure. May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

### TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Describes what tools, equipment and tests are required to complete the job safely and with the highest level of quality.

Describes what tools, equipment and tests are required to complete the job safely and with the highest level of quality.
### BEST PRACTICE

**Icon:** 🏆

Describes a best practice to be utilized when possible.

- Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
- May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

### PROCEDURE

**Icon:** 🔄

Describes a condition where equipment and procedure integrity is at risk. This is used to alert personnel to operating procedures and practices, which if not observed, could result in severe damage to the machine, its components or the end product.

- Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
- May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

### AWARENESS/IMPORTANT

**Icon:** ⚠️

Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure. May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

- Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
- May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

### INSPECTION AND MEASUREMENTS

**Icon:** ✅

Describes inspection, Quality Assurance and/or Quality Control practices.

- Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
- May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.

### SAFETY WARNING

**Icon:** 🚨

Describes a condition where personal safety may be at risk. This is used to alert personnel to operating procedures & practices which, if not observed, may result in personal injury.

- Highlights a step in the procedure which is either unusual or very particular to this procedure.
- May also indicate awareness (additional information) or a cautionary concern in the procedure.
History and Introduction to Asphalt

The modern use of asphalt for road and street construction began in the late 1800s, and grew rapidly with the emerging automobile industry. Since that time, asphalt technology has made giant strides such that today the equipment and techniques used to build asphalt pavement structures are highly sophisticated.

One rule that has remained constant throughout asphalt's long history in construction is that an asphalt concrete layer is only as good as the materials and workmanship that go into it. No amount of sophisticated equipment can make up for use of poor quality materials, poor sampling and testing techniques and/or poor production practices.

Asphalt concrete is composed of three basic components - asphalt binder, mineral aggregate and air voids. Aggregates are generally classified into two groups – (1) coarse and (2) fine; and normally they together constitute 90 to 96 percent by weight of the total mixture. Asphalt binders are classified by various grading systems and normally constitute 4 to 10 percent of the total mixture. Another very important, but often overlooked component of an asphalt mix is air voids.

There are many different types of asphalts and many different types of aggregates. Consequently, it is possible to make different kinds of asphalt concrete. Among the most common types of asphalt concretes are:

- Dense-graded hot mix asphalt (Superpave Mixtures)
- Gap Graded hot mix asphalt (Stone Matrix Asphalt or SMA)
- Open-graded asphalt or porous friction course
- Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course
- Asphalt Surface Treatments
- Emulsified asphalt mixes (cold mixes)
- Permeable Asphalt Drainage Course
- Others, In-Place Recycled Mixes (both hot and cold)

This training program primarily addresses asphalt-concrete (AC) produced at conventional plant temperatures or through a warm mix technology. AC is a paving material that consists of asphalt binder and mineral aggregate with appropriate air voids. The asphalt binder, either asphalt cement or a modified asphalt-cement, acts as a binding agent to glue aggregate particles into a dense mass and to waterproof the mixture. When bound together, the mineral aggregate acts as a stone framework to impart strength and toughness to the system. The performance of the mixture is affected both by the properties of the individual components and the combined reaction in the system.