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## Department of Safety and Professional Services Resumes In-Person Trades Exams

**MADISON, Wis.** – The Department of Safety and Professional Services is administering trades exams to 153 test-takers at the Hill Farms State Office Building in Madison beginning at 8 a.m. on Thursday, June 25. After canceling exams in March, April and May, the department began offering testing services again earlier this month in Eau Claire and will offer additional testing in Pewaukee and Appleton in July.

The department typically offers two testing events per month all year, but the COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency prompted the cancellation of exams this spring. Before restarting examinations, the department modified testing sites to adhere to recommended best practices regarding physical distancing and room capacities to ensure employee and test-taker safety.

“We’ve changed the way that we’re doing it so we can keep everybody safe,” said Joan Gage, the program manager in the DPS Office of Education and Examinations. “We’re to ensure observing social distancing at all times. We are meeting test-takers in the lobby and directing them to exam rooms. There will be one test-taker per six-foot table and ten people per room.”

The trades exams are paper tests and are proctored in-person. All 38 different exams are available during the testing event. Exams vary in length, and some test-takers register and sit for multiple exams. Coordination is complex under normal circumstances and even more so with the required social distancing and other safety precautions.

“There were very few of our services that we did not fully maintain during the public health emergency, but testing was one that we had to rethink and retool,” said DPS Secretary-designee Dawn Crim. “We are glad to have testing up and running, and I appreciate the work our team has done to make this possible so that test-takers can complete their exams, complete their license applications, and enter or advance in their chosen fields.”

Most of the 240 credentials DPS issues require some sort of exam for initial licensing. While many professions use third-party partners to offer tests, the department administers most trades exams, such as plumbing or welding.

Gage says the department has added new dates and testing rooms in all locations to the 2020 calendar. This will increase testing capacity to meet demand as cancellations are rescheduled and new license applicants continue to register for exams.

While potential test-takers were understanding about the cancellations and uncertainty that COVID-19 created, most, Gage says, are eager and grateful to resume progress on their credentials. “They’re happy to be able to complete their exams,” she said. “They want to be here and get this done.”

The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, and maintains the Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is

self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.

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