

Program Guide

Revised February 2026



Become A Certified Technical Investigator (CTI) with NATIA

The Certified Technical Investigator (CTI) Program was created by the National Technical Investigators' Association (NATIA) to establish and maintain up-to-date standards in the Law Enforcement Technical Community. A Certification Committee comprised of representatives from state, local, and federal agencies worked together to create these standards. The standards and testing are reviewed annually to maintain currency.

This comprehensive program guide, revised in 2026, outlines the benefits of the CTI program and maintenance standards for active CTIs.

Why Should You Consider Taking the CTI Exam?

- Certified Technical Investigators (CTIs) will have demonstrated basic knowledge in audio, video, and electronics. The technical community regards this knowledge as essential in today's challenging law enforcement environment.
- The CTI guidelines and Reference Manual show the employer what skill sets are needed to become a Technical Investigator and what they will be exposed to.
- A standard level of skills and expectations needed to do your job. These have been tested and have been successfully passed if the person is a NATIA CTI.
- Recognition as a Certified Professional by your peers, your employers, and the court (Expert Witness).
- Taking the training or having the experience needed to challenge the CTI exam exposes the student to all aspects of our industry and puts us all at an even starting point.
- When working with other agencies, any or all Certified Technical Investigators will know they are working with a person of similar knowledge and exposure, and an immediate trust is developed.
- It is an asset to list on your resume.
- There are cases where it benefited the member's salary.
- Some agencies are now requiring their staff to become NATIA CTIs.

How Do I Become A NATIA CTI?

Applicants must be a current, regular member of NATIA to take the exam. Members must register online for the exam, pay the \$150 exam fee, and successfully pass the NATIA CTI exam.

Who Is Eligible to Become A NATIA CTI?

All current regular NATIA members are eligible to take the NATIA CTI exam. Non-members must first complete an online membership application at www.natia.org/membership and obtain membership approval before being eligible to take the exam. Associate, Retired and Honorary members are not eligible to take the exam.

What Type of Certification Will I Be Granted After Successfully Passing the Exam?

The certification granted will be based on the following criteria:

- **CTI Certifications** will be granted to those who have been a member for two years *and* have five years of technical field experience **OR** to those who have been a member for two years *and* have successfully completed a NATIA approved 80-hour CTI course through a NATIA approved training provider.
- **Provisional CTI Certifications** will be granted to those who have not yet met the experience or membership requirements outlined above. Once the requirements are met, the member is then granted a full CTI certification.

What Qualifies as Technical Field Experience?

Technical Field Experience refers to duties in covert video, audio, tracking, intrusion detection or TSCM, telephone-related intercepts, computer, video, audio, or mobile forensics. **The employee must be actively engaged with hands-on experience in these disciplines.** Law enforcement experience by itself is non-qualifying. Investigative experience by itself is non-qualifying.

This experience must constitute a significant, recurrent workload performed in the service of employment with a public law enforcement, military, or government intelligence agency. Overt duties such as video production/crime scene video and general



information technology work are not creditable experience when performed by themselves. When performed in the company of covert work, a limited nexus with the covert skill set is recognized and creditable toward meeting this requirement.

How Long Is my Certification Valid?

Certifications are valid for three years. CTIs must renew their certification every three-year period or will be required to retake the exam at the full fee.

Are There Ongoing Requirements to Maintain My Certification?

To maintain an active certification status, CTIs must:

1. **Maintain NATIA membership with dues paid and current each year.** If membership lapses, the certification status is inactivated. Certifications may be reactivated when membership is reinstated unless the certification expiration has expired.
2. **Complete sixty (60) hours of NATIA approved Professional Development Training (PDT) over each three-year period.** Forty of these hours must be formal training where a certificate/documentation is received and twenty of the hours *may* be informal training (such as research, reading articles/website information on technical operations, attending tech group meetings, etc.).
Any job-related training with a clear nexus to electronic surveillance counts hour per hour towards the continuing education requirement. This includes any job-related training received through your agency; other agencies; companies; organizations; NATIA Annual Training, Certification, & Technology Exhibitions; NATIA Chapter Meetings; and NATIA training courses.
All PDT hours must be reported and proof of training uploaded by the member via the NATIA website, under the Certification header.
3. **Renew their certification online every three years and pay their \$50 renewal fee before the expiration date.**

Is There a Fee?

The initial exam fee of \$150 includes the first three years of CTI certification. Applicants that fail the test may re-test one time (up to a year from the date of the first exam) at no additional fee.

CTIs must renew their certification every three years. The recertification fee is \$50 if the member submits their renewal application before their expiration date. If a member does not renew before the expiration date, the member may be required to retake the CTI exam and pay the full application fee.

Where and When Will the Certification Exam Be Given?

Tests are administered every summer at NATIA's Annual Training, Certification, & Technology Exhibition, by prior arrangement at some NATIA Chapter Meetings, and at the conclusion of NATIA approved 80-hour CTI training courses given at approved training institutions.

What Does the CTI Exam Consist Of?

The exam is a 100 question, multiple-choice exam. NATIA administers the exam and is the certifying entity. Applicants are required to score a minimum of 75% to secure a passing grade. If an applicant does not pass on the first attempt, the applicant may retake the exam once again at no additional fee up to one year from the date of the first exam.



Is A Study Guide or Reference Manual Available?

The NATIA Certification Manual is 300+ pages of valuable information and color photos that is an excellent reference to have on hand at your agency or to use as a study guide for the NATIA CTI Exam. Topics include:

- Legal Requirements
- Basic Electronics
- Electrical Safety
- Batteries & Power Supplies
- Acoustic, Microphones, and Audio Recorders
- RF Transmitters/Receivers
- Audio Installations
- Video Technology & Recorders
- Imaging Technologies
- Video Basics
- Video & Still Cameras
- Video Transmissions (RF, IP)
- Entry Bypass Recognition
- Covert Concealments
- Handling Digital Evidence (including Audio Storage Formats)
- Vehicle Installations
- Tracking Basics
- Telephony
- UAS (Drone)
- Technical Surveillance Countermeasures
- Sensors & Related Devices
- Operations Planning

NATIA Certification Reference Manuals are available online for \$45 (plus shipping) to our members through the NATIA website under the Certification header. Non-member orders, bulk purchases, or shipments to outside of the United States cannot be processed online and must be purchased by contacting certification@natia.org.

Do You Offer Specialized Certifications?

We currently offer Specialized Certifications in *Technical Installations in A High Voltage Environment* and *IP Video*. Other certifications will be added as additional courses are offered. To qualify, members must successfully complete the full training course(s) through NATIA's Certification Program and must be a current NATIA CTI with membership dues paid in full and current.

If the member is not yet a CTI but would like the training course to apply as a Specialized Certification, the member will be granted a Specialized Certification after the member has successfully passed the CTI exam and has been granted a CTI certification.

A Provisional CTI may secure Specialized Certifications, but the Specialized Certificate will not be issued until after the Provisional CTI has attained full CTI status.

Specialized Certifications do not have an expiration date but are only valid with current NATIA membership and current CTI status.

How Do I Recertify When My Expiration Date Is Approaching?

CTIs must submit their application to renew their CTI certification online under the Certification header of the NATIA member website. To be eligible to renew your CTI certification, you must 1) Have completed a minimum of 60 hours of Professional Development Training over the three-year certification period and documented those PDT hours under the Certification header of the member website, 2) Be a current, active member of NATIA and 3) Submit your application for renewal and pay your \$50 CTI renewal fee that will extend your certification for the next three-year period.



What Training Facilities Are Available That Teach NATIA Approved Material?

An 80-hour training course is not required to become a NATIA CTI. However, if a member elects to take an 80-hour CTI course, which can be used to waive the five year experience requirement to be designated a full CTI instead of Provisional CTI, it must be secured through one of NATIA's approved training vendors.

As of publishing, the following three providers have been approved to supply this training. Members must register for their courses directly with the training facilities/providers, as NATIA does not manage these trainings.

Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)

Georgia | (912) 267-2702 | www.fleetc.gov/training

Interagency Training Center (ITC) Basic Operations Course (BTOC)

Integrity Surveillance Group

Who May I Contact with Questions?

For all questions related to the National Technical Investigators' Association's Certified Technical Investigator program, please contact Education and Certification Manager Ken Wagoner. He may be reached at certification@natia.org or (703) 951-3839.

To submit an application for membership, please review our membership information page at www.natia.org/membership for eligibility details and the link to our online application form. Please be advised that all applications require a \$50 membership dues payment to be submitted, and that applications must first be reviewed and approved before membership is granted.

