

South Carolina Forestry Commission
Physical Fitness Test Medical Exemption Form

All fireline employees of the South Carolina Forestry Commission are required to participate in the Moderate Level Work Capacity Test annually. This test was developed for the U.S Forest Service for wildland firefighters. The test requires a 2 mile walk with a 25 pound pack in 30 minutes or less. A time of 30 minutes approximates an aerobic fitness score of 40.

The South Carolina Forestry Commission adopted this test as part of its fitness program in 2004 to help ensure that fireline employees who perform direct fireline activities (wildland firefighting and/or prescribed burning) are physically able to perform their duties safely and efficiently.

The objectives of the Program are:

- A. To ensure the readiness of fireline employees to perform their jobs.
- B. To increase fireline employee's productivity.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS The Program should also produce the following positive benefits to the fireline employees:

- A. Decreased medical costs due to fewer accidents and illnesses.
- B. Increased awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle to long-term health and happiness.
- C. Reduced risk factors for lifestyle-related conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, muscular skeletal problems, pulmonary disease, cancer, obesity, diabetes, depression, and other potential disabilities.
- D. Improved morale and self-concept.

JOB RELATEDNESS

A. Readiness to Respond: Fireline employees have a duty and an obligation to be ready to respond to situations affecting the public's safety and property. A physically fit fireline employee can go from rest to exertion, can sustain that exertion, and recover from it safely. Unfit fireline employees cannot perform their jobs effectively or efficiently and in many wildfire and/or prescribed burning situations, unfit fireline employees are risks to themselves and to anyone they are protecting or with whom they are working.

B. Survivability: Trauma patients who are physically fit, have a higher probability of surviving any type of physical trauma. Heart attack victims who are physically fit have a greater survival rate than unfit people if they do develop cardiovascular disease.

C. Fatigue Resistance and Accident Prevention: One's tolerance to fatigue increases with physical fitness level. Physically fit people do not get as tired, and can work harder and longer than unfit people. As a consequence, the incidence of accidents and injuries decreases as fitness increases. Many accidents occur when people become fatigued and lose alertness.

D. Response Options: In a confrontation situation, an unfit fireline employee's options are limited. The fit fireline employee has a broader response repertoire because of greater stamina, strength, and flexibility.

E. Endurance: Many fireline tasks require sustained heavy activity. High degrees of muscular and cardio-respiratory endurance are necessary.

F. Stress Management: As one becomes more fit, one's physiological mechanisms for managing and handling stress are enhanced. This is critical in fireline duties.

G. Productivity: A healthy, fit employee gets a fireline job done more quickly, which means before more lives and property are destroyed.

The physical activities involved in direct fireline duties (either wildland firefighting and/or prescribed burning) include;

- Operating an open cab fire suppression bulldozer any time of day/night under varying conditions.
- Utilizing hand tools (fire rakes, pulaskis, etc) to manually construct firebreaks, often in steep and rocky terrain.
- Walking the perimeter of each wildland fire scene to determine fire origin, cause, and acres burned.
- Manually manipulating up to 100 feet of heavy steel cable to free a bogged bulldozer.
- Extensive walking through rough woodland while wearing required personal protective and tactical equipment (hardhat, nomex clothing, gloves, eye protection, leather boots, 5 lb fire shelter, water, radio, etc). In addition, firefighters often carry a 15 pound backfire torch during prescribed burning and firefighting operations.
- Returning on foot to transport truck through rough terrain when bulldozer is disabled.

The high-stress environment encountered by a firefighter may include extreme temperatures, exposure to heavy concentrations of dense smoke, low visibility, steep terrain, boggy terrain, high winds, and low relative humidity. On large wildfires, 12-hour shifts are common.

Based on my knowledge of his/her current physical health, I believe that he/she can safely perform the physical activities associated with direct fireline duties required of a wildland firefighter as described above. By signing this form, I am exempting

_____,
(patient's printed name/date of birth)

from participating in the annual moderate level physical fitness walk for calendar year _____.

Signature of Qualified Medical Provider

Printed Name of Qualified Medical Provider

Address City State Zip Code

Office Phone Date