

Fayetteville Fire Department Entry Level Physical Ability Test Preparation Guide

Test Preparation

Firefighting involves extremely hard and skilled physical work, as well as handling emergency and life-or-death situations. The physical and mental demands of firefighting are sometimes underestimated, and therefore, many applicants are overwhelmed by the physical ability testing process involved in the testing of applicants. Demanding physical standards are absolutely necessary because firefighting requires a high level of physical fitness and mental alertness.

It must be emphasized that regardless of an individual's level of fitness, a person should be in good health before beginning any physical training program. Preparation for the physical ability test can be accomplished by a physical training program that emphasizes cardiorespiratory (heart/lung) fitness, muscular strength, and endurance. It is especially important that small-framed individuals and individuals whose current jobs do not require physical exertion prepare more conscientiously for the test. Most people can improve their level of physical fitness through an intensive training program that includes running for cardiorespiratory fitness and weight lifting to develop muscular strength.

Cardio-respiratory

Cardiorespiratory fitness is the ability of the heart to deliver oxygen to the muscles and other tissues. This is called aerobic power. Simply stated, the ability to perform exercise and/or physical work is directly dependent upon how well the body delivers oxygen to the working muscles. A physically fit person will be able to deliver large amounts of oxygen to the muscles and therefore be capable of prolonged muscular exercise (e.g. fighting fires). In comparison, an out-of-shape individual will not be capable of delivering adequate amounts of oxygen to the muscles, and therefore will fatigue quickly and be forced to stop working much sooner.

Muscular Strength

Strength can be defined as the ability to apply force. Since nearly all movements are performed against some resistance, a certain degree of muscular strength is needed to perform any activity. Firefighters perform activities against much greater resistance than the average individual. Therefore, the firefighter must necessarily have good muscular strength and endurance in order to effectively and safely handle the firefighting equipment and perform the duties required of a firefighter.

Body Conditioning

An excess accumulation of body fat is undesirable for a variety of reasons. From a medical standpoint, health problems exist in which obesity or "over fatness" is considered a risk factor, and for which a reduction in excess fat is desirable. From a physical performance standpoint, excess fat is like carrying dead weight and can only hinder physical performance. Since firefighting requires a near maximum effort from the heart and other related muscles, additional fat weight adds an extra burden to the cardiovascular system and thus, the overweight firefighter puts himself/herself in a potentially dangerous situation when fighting fires.

Activities to Help Develop Your Fitness

Running and weight training are two activities that can be used in a physical fitness training program to help develop cardio-respiratory fitness and muscular strength. There are several ways to devise a physical fitness training program. One way is to join a gym or spa where a fitness

specialist can help you design a training routine to fit your needs. Another method is less expensive—and you can accomplish the same thing—by designing your own program. Remember that both methods work, but only if you train conscientiously, aggressively, and consistently.

From a training standpoint you should gradually work up to a point where you can run 1.5 miles in 12 minutes or less to establish your cardiorespiratory fitness. Your strength should be gradually developed to where you can do 4 chin-ups, 20 push-ups, and 40 sit-ups with comparative ease. This is about the minimum fitness level for an applicant to safely complete the physical ability test. It must be emphasized that following these guidelines is no guarantee that you will pass the test. However, your chances for passing will be greatly increased if adequate preparatory physical training has taken place.

Applicants Attire

Applicants must have suitable footwear in order to participate in the test. Gym shoes are preferred, but other types of rubber soled shoes are allowed if, in the opinion of the Head Monitor, they provide adequate traction and do not have any design features which would add to the risk of injury to the Applicant. Shoes with leather soles, cleats, metal toes or heel plates, exaggerated heels, etc., are not acceptable. Applicants who appear for the test wearing unacceptable footwear will be rescheduled and instructed as to what types of footwear are acceptable.

Applicants may wear any kind of clothing they wish provided that, in the opinion of the Test Administrator, they do not have any design features which would add to the risk of injury to the Applicant. Applicants who appear for the test wearing unsuitable clothes, shorts, etc., shall be warned of the possible consequences and will be rescheduled.

Failing Scores

If an Applicant is given a “failing” score on an evolution after such repeated attempts as are allowed for that evolution have been made, the Applicant is given a “FAIL” score for the physical agility test and is **NOT** allowed to attempt any subsequent evolutions.