



SEASONAL FIREFIGHTER PHYSICAL PREPARATION GUIDE

The purpose of this resource is to guide potential CAL FIRE firefighters in their physical preparation for initial training and employment in all-risk emergency response.





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FIREFIGHTER 1 PHYSICAL DUTIES, INITIAL TRAINING AND FIELDWORK

CAL FIRE firefighters engage in arduous fieldwork related to emergency response. The California Incident Command Certification System identifies the fitness level needed for fieldwork as arduous:

“Arduous duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of the work is set by the emergency situation.”

ACHIEVING A LEVEL OF SUPERIOR CONDITIONING ATTRIBUTES TO THE FOLLOWING:

SAFETY:

For you and your future coworkers when you work together as a team.

INJURY PREVENTION AND SUSTAINABILITY:

Professional firefighters have enduring responsibilities. Superior conditioning levels support injury prevention, stress management, recovery and sustainability.

PERSONAL SUCCESS:

Research shows that higher fitness levels translate to higher achievement levels across multiple tactical fields.

SATISFACTION AND ENJOYMENT:

Arduous task completion can be appreciated more on a personal level when individuals have the fitness levels necessary to recover quickly and then process the surrounding environment and their accomplishments.



PREPARING FOR INITIAL TRAINING:

Initial training for CAL FIRE firefighters will include arduous level field work. In order to ensure you are prepared for initial training to become an all-risk firefighter, it is recommended that you complete the following self-assessments and utilize fitness plans to help guide your physical preparedness.

SELF-ASSESSMENTS:

Work Capacity Assessment: USFS Work Capacity Test (3-mile flat hike with 45-pound pack completed in less than 45 minutes.)

This test is nationally validated as an entry-level assessment of physical work capacity for wildland firefighters.



General Aerobic Conditioning Assessment: 12 METs is equivalent to running 1.5 miles in 12 minutes or less.

This standard is based on the amount of oxygen needed to safely perform common firefighting tasks as referenced by *NFPA 1582 Chapter 8: Annual Occupational Fitness Evaluation*, "To ensure this level of cardiac work will not precipitate a sudden cardiac event. If a firefighter has aerobic capacity below 12 METs a firefighter shall be counseled to improve their fitness." Use the QR code to assess METs during a 1.5 mile run.



Strength Assessments: Push-ups and Deadlift

Push-ups: Firefighting is a physically stressful job which affects the cardiovascular system. A 2019 Harvard University study demonstrated that the ability to do 40 push-ups in a row can help protect from future cardiovascular disease.

Deadlift: Studies show that being able to deadlift 165 pounds 3 times in a row correlates with the physical strength needed to extricate a victim from a home or a vehicle. (Foulis et. Al. 2017, USARIEM 2018). QR code links to an NSCA video on proper deadlift technique.



EXAMPLE PHYSICAL TRAINING PREP PROGRAMS:

4 Week Example:

Basic Strength and Conditioning. This plan is a great place to start or re-start your Strength and Conditioning from.



"The Black" Two Month Example:

This is an 8 week program that dials up the intensity and has a wildland firefighter focus utilizing a wide range of equipment.



Deadlift Focus:

The deadlift is a fundamental movement and an important lift in the CAL FIRE Fire Control Physical Training Program of the CAL FIRE Training Center. It is important to use good form and to progress this exercise patiently. To focus on improving your deadlift for one month, refer to the article linked in the QR code.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

To learn more about fitness and work capacity for wildland firefighting, visit this NWCG Manual:



If you have questions please email wellnessunit@fire.ca.gov

Follow @CALFIREWELLNESS on Instagram for updates



Disclaimer: the information contained in this document is intended to provide examples of available personal wellness and fitness resources that are for educational resources only. The examples in this document are not intended to take the place of professional advice or services. The information provided has been verified by subject matter experts. We acknowledge these are examples. This is not an exhaustive list; many other tools and resources exist and are available.