SAMPLE Fire Department Physical Ability Test

The sample physical ability test on the following pages is a model for cities to use when creating their own test.

Cities and fire departments should review and modify this sample policy to meet local needs. Physical ability tests based on actual firefighting and fire ground tasks as less likely to be challenged for validity than tests that require running, sit-ups, push-ups, etc. The activities should represent actual physical skills, and candidates should be allowed to complete the skills in the same manner as they would on the fire ground. If the test activities are timed, the time allowed should be realistic. Before using any physical ability test, the fire department should provide medical monitoring and rehab onsite during the physical ability test. The city or fire department should provide a copy of this test to each candidate before scheduling the physical ability test so candidates have the opportunity to prepare for the test.

Courts have ruled that tests that are not based on job requirements, and that exclude female candidates disproportionately, are not valid. According to the EEOC, a selection procedure is said to be valid if it can be proven by an employer that it is "job related and consistent with business necessity." The test should be administered realistically, so spacing events around the drill ground simulates walking between tasks on the fire scene and provides short recovery intervals for the candidates between test events.

MTAS recommends that a city provide to candidates sufficient overview of the testing procedures so candidates understand the test events and can prepare for them before taking the test. A best practice is for a city to make a video of a firefighter taking the physical ability test and demonstrating the proper way to complete each station. MTAS recommends that the city standardize instructions by writing them down and having the test administrator read the instructions to each candidate and verify that the candidate understands the instructions.

To prevent fraud, the city should check a valid government issued photo of each candidate on the day of the test to verify that the person taking the test is the actual candidate.

Candidates should sign a liability waiver before taking the test, and a basic liability waiver is included in this packet. The city should review waiver before the city uses it, and should use whatever waiver the city attorney recommends.

The city should document everything well and in detail, especially if a candidate commits a safety violation, fails an individual event, or fails the test. Document, document, document!

CANDIDATE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST WAIVER AND RELEASE FORM

I, ___________________________________, residing at ________________________ in the city of ____________________, county of _______________________, state of ______________________ acknowledge that I have voluntarily applied to participate in the City of <Anytown> fire department physical ability test. I have had the opportunity to review, and I have reviewed, the department's physical ability test description of events.

I am aware that the physical ability test is strenuous, and I acknowledge that I am in good physical condition and have no known medical problems that would affect my ability to participate in this event. I hereby release and discharge the City of <Anytown>, its officers, employees, or agents, and the City of <Anytown> from all actions, claims, or demands that I and my heirs, distributes, guardians, legal representatives, or assigns now, or in the future, may have for any loss, personal injury, death, or property damage resulting from my participation in the City of <Anytown> physical ability test. This waiver and release extends to all claims of every kind or nature whatsoever, foreseen or unforeseen, known or unknown.

Should I suffer an injury or illness, I authorize officials of the attending emergency services to use their discretion to have me medically treated and transported to a medical facility.

In signing this release, I acknowledge that I have carefully read the above waiver of liability and hold harmless agreement and fully understand its contents. I am aware that this is a release of liability and a contract between myself and the City of <Anytown>, I sign it voluntarily of my own free will, and I am at least eighteen (18) years of age and fully competent.

______________________________________ ______________
Signature of Candidate Date

______________________________________ ______________
Signature of Witness Date

Candidate’s photo ID checked and verified by: ______________________________

<Anytown> Fire Department Physical Ability Test

Overview

TAKING THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST:
This pamphlet contains important facts about the fire department's physical ability test. Read it carefully to learn what the requirements are and what the test will be like. This test is a measure of your ability to do certain activities that are important to the job of a firefighter and emergency medical responder. This does not require you to be trained as a firefighter or emergency medical responder when you take the test.

PARTS OF THE TEST:
There are ten (10) events in the test. Each event is described on the following pages. The test is conducted as a full event with candidates moving from one station to the next to simulate emergency operations. An overall time for the completion of the test will be taken: no individual event times will be taken. Each station must be completed successfully before the candidate can proceed to the next station. A maximum time of 20 minutes [Note: each city or fire department should set the time required based on local needs and the layout of the test area] will be permitted for the entire test.

WHAT TO WEAR OR BRING TO THE TEST:
Candidates should wear comfortable active working clothes. Sweat shirts, T-shirts, and rubber soled shoes, such as tennis shoes, or work boots are recommended apparel. Comfortable pants, such as jeans or sweat pants should be worn. Tight clothes should be avoided. Gloves may be used during the physical ability testing. Candidates will be provided a turnout coat with a liner, helmet, and SCBA harness containing an air bottle, to wear during all stations. Candidates will don this gear, which weighs approximately 45 pounds, before starting the test. [Note: the test may be conducted with a weight vest in place of the equipment if the city or fire department so desires. The candidate should still wear the helmet.] Food, drink, or tobacco products are not allowed in the classroom or at the drill ground at any time. Water will be available on the drill ground during the test, and candidates are encouraged to stay hydrated. Candidates must bring a valid government issued photo ID to the test site the day of the test or they will not be allowed to take the test.

PREPARING TO TAKE THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST:
The best way to prepare for the test events is to be in the best general physical condition possible. General physical conditioning exercises that increase your endurance, stamina and strength will be helpful. Suggested general conditioning exercises include walking, running, swimming, climbing stairs, sit-ups, push-ups, weight lifting, etc. Candidates should check with their physician before taking the physical ability test to be sure they are in good physical condition and have no medical problems that may prevent them from taking the test. On the day of the test, drink water before taking the test, avoid eating for at least three hours before the test, and stretch before taking the test.

TESTING:
Candidates will report to the orientation station. An overview and walk through of the test site will be given and any questions answered. Each candidate must sign a hold harmless agreement before being permitted to participate in the physical ability test. Candidates will wait at the start line until advised to begin by the test administrator. Gear will be issued to candidates, and they will be orally instructed to put it on before beginning the test. Running is not permitted on the drill field: only fast walking is allowed. Running is defined as moving so quickly that both feet are simultaneously off the ground. Candidates may not be assisted during this test, such as by persons handing them items or holding onto them (except in an emergency). The total completion time will be taken upon completion of the last event. Upon completing the test, candidates shall return to the orientation station and remain there until released by the test administrator.

Station #1: **WEIGHT LIFT**
Description: The candidate shall lift a 50 pound weight from the ground to a standing position between his/her waist and chest and hold for 30 seconds before returning it to the ground. Only the hands can be used to hold the weight, although the hands positioning on the weight is at the candidate's discretion. The arms shall not be locked at the elbow in an upright position while holding the weight.

Station #2: **LADDER RAISE**
Description: A 16-foot roof ladder, weighing approximately 35 pounds, will be positioned at a 90 degree angle (horizontal) to a building with the bottom of the ladder touching the building. The candidate will raise the ladder from a horizontal position on the ground to a vertical position by walking forward grasping consecutive rungs, without dropping or losing control of the ladder, against the building and then return the ladder, in similar fashion, to its original position on the ground.

Station #3: **EQUIPMENT MOVE**
Description: On the signal of "go," the candidate will lift, remove and carry three fire department tools weighing between 25 and 75 pounds each from a fire engine storage compartment to a designated target area indicated on the ground 10-feet away, and then return the tools to the fire engine compartment in a similar arrangement and close the compartment door.

Station #4: **HYDRAULIC RESCUE TOOL OPERATION**
Description: The candidate will lift a hydraulic rescue tool spreader, weighing approximately 77 pounds, from the ground to waist height and fully open the spreaders and reclose them before returning the spreader to the ground. The candidate shall use arms and hands to hold and operate spreader without resting it upon body. The candidate must have full control over the unit and handle it steadily and smoothly. The spreader will be connected to the running power unit.

Station #5: **AERIAL LADDER CLIMB**
<u>Description:</u> The candidate will climb, ensuring that at least one foot and one hand touches each rung of the ladder, to the top of the aerial ladder extended to a height of 50 feet at 60 degrees. Upon reaching the top, the candidate will touch the top rung (step) of the ladder and then descend the ladder to the ground floor.

Station #6: **VENTILATION EVENT**
<u>Description:</u> The candidate will lift a sledge hammer weighing 9 pounds and position themselves on a simulated (slanted) roof. The candidate will bring the hammer and his/her hands <u>above his/her shoulder</u> and in a chopping motion strike the rubber mat in the target area. Both hands must be kept on the hammer and the hammer kept in full control. The candidate will repeat this procedure in a continuous motion without releasing the grip on the hammer, as quickly as possible and without pausing to rest. In order to make a correct stroke, the candidate must bring the sledge hammer and his/her hands above his/her shoulder, bringing the hammer to a completely vertical position, prior to striking the mat in the target area. The candidate must complete 35 correct strokes within the target area to end this event.

Station #7: **TOWER EVENT**
<u>Description:</u> The candidate shall pick up a standpipe pack consisting of 100 feet of 1½" hose strapped in folds of about 5 feet in length. The candidate will enter the hose tower carrying a standpipe pack consisting of 100 feet of 1½" hose and climb up the stairway as rapidly and safely as possible. The candidate will lay the standpipe pack on the ground at third floor (second landing) and proceed up. Upon reaching the fourth (top) floor, the candidate will raise a section of 2½" hose with a nozzle attached from the ground using a rope which has been tied off to the nozzle and placed through the window. A hose roller will be available to allow the candidate the option of pulling the rope or hoisting it. The candidate shall raise the hose to the point that the candidate can grasp the nozzle. The hose will then be smoothly returned to the ground. The candidate will then descend a 35-foot extension ladder that has been extended to and secured at the fourth floor window of the hose tower. The candidate must assure that at least one (1) foot touches each step of the stairs and that at least one (1) foot and one (1) hand touches each rung (step) of the ladder during ascending and descending. The event will be complete upon reaching the ground level.

Station #8: **VICTIM DRAG**
<u>Description:</u> The candidate shall drag a "victim" (weighted training manikin) weighing approximately 160 pounds 100 feet without stopping or pausing to rest.

Station #9: **HOSE DRAG**
<u>Description:</u> A 100-foot section of 1½" hose charged with water, connected to a hydrant will be completely stretched out so that the nozzle is approximately 100 feet from the hydrant. The candidate will be required to pick up the hoseline at the nozzle and move it completely past the hydrant and extend it the full opposite direction, placing it approximately 100 feet on the other side of the hydrant, resulting in a total drag of approximately 200 feet.

Station #10: **HOSE COUPLING**

<u>Description:</u> The candidate will proceed to the fire engine, where a 2½" discharge will be available. The cap will be on the discharge but loose enough so that the cap may be removed by hand without the need for a spanner wrench. A 2½" section of fire hose will be on the ground, and the female hose coupling will be located behind a line 4-feet from the pump discharge. The candidate will stand behind the line and next to the female hose coupling. Upon the signal of "go," the candidate will proceed to connect the female hose coupling to the 2½" discharge on the pump panel so that the connection is hand tight. Once the connection is complete, the candidate will reverse the process and disconnect the hose, place the cap back on the discharge, and return the female hose connection behind the starting line. The entire length of hose must be behind the starting line to complete the event.