THE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST

The Physical Ability Test was designed after an exhaustive job task analysis conducted by ARA/HUMAN FACTORS, one of the country's leading authorities on public safety job standards development. The test accurately reflects the physical demands of a number of fire suppression activities. You might think of the test as a "sample" of a number of fireg round tasks necessary to the safe and effective performance of firefighters. You should pace yourself as you move from test event to test event; however, firefighters need to move with dispatch, so it is advisable to perform the evolutions as quickly as possible.

It may not be possible to provide applicants with an opportunity to utilize the equipment at the testing site prior to the administration of the actual test. To familiarize yourself with the test items, a complete description follows, along with specific training regimens that can help you prepare for the test and improve your performance. The test requires no learned skills and has been specifically designed to access only necessary firefighting physical capacities.

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CONDITIONS

Each applicant should be outfitted with a bunker (firefighter) coat, gloves and a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) without a face piece (≈50 lbs.) while participating in firefighting testing. Footgear can be work boots or sneakers provided by the applicant. The test is a timed event. You may rest at any time during the performance of the test; however, the clock continues to run. Research has shown that more fit individuals with greater cardiovascular reserve can perform the tasks faster than less fit individuals.

FIRST TASK: LADDER EXTENSION

Ladders are an integral part of the fire suppression effort. The capacity to extend the fly section is an essential part of North County extinguishment operations. It is usual and customary to expect that firefighters should be able to perform this evolution individually and without assistance. A 35-foot extension ladder is affixed to a horizontal bar in a vertical position rendering it immobile from any position other than perpendicular. The halyard is attached to the fly section. Employing a hand over hand motion, the applicant must extend the fly section until the fly section stops, then retract it using a controlled motion without allowing the rope to slide through the hands.

SECOND TASK: STAIR CLIMB

Pick up and carry a shoulder load of hose weighing approximately 44 pounds (two 50-foot sections of attack line) 106 feet to the drill tower. Carry it up the stairs to the top of the drill tower, a vertical distance of 37 feet, and deposit it on the floor. The hose may be carried or slung. Stairs may be taken in multiples on the ascent. The hand rails may be used to assist in the climb. Pace yourself up the stair climb. Applicants who attempt to complete the task too quickly frequently place themselves in extreme oxygen debt, find it difficult to recover, and thus reduce their performance on the events that follow.

THIRD TASK: HOSE HOIST

After dropping the shoulder load in the first task, hoist a donut roll of hose weighing about 43 pounds 40 vertical feet by pulling on a rope. Use a hand over hand pulling motion. Pull the donut roll over the wall and deposit it on the deck of the tower to end the hose hoist evolution. Walk back to the stairwell and descend the stairs to the ground level, touching each step. The clock continues to run while you descend the stairwell.

FOURTH TASK: FORCIBLE ENTRY

Exit the stairs on the ground level of the drill tower and walk approximately 20 feet to the Keiser Force Machine (positioned adjacent to the stairwell). Using the 8-pound shot hammer provided, drive the 160-pound steel beam of the Keiser Force Machine a distance of five feet. Strike the end of the beam, contacting the surface as squarely as possible for maximum transfer. Pay attention to the position of the beam in relation to the inseam of your foot-they should be on the same plane. Getting "ahead" of yourself will result in the point of impact at the handle of the Force Machine as opposed to the head of the mallet. This task is complete when the leading edge of the sled is eve with the tray. This completes the forcible entry event.

FIFTH TASK: HOSE ADVANCE

Walk a measured distance of 140 feet to the hose advance station. Grasp the end of the charged 1 ¾ -inch hose line and drag it 75 feet to the line indicated. Once the nozzle crosses the finish line, place the hose on the ground. This completes the fifth task.

SIXTH TASK: VICTIM RESCUE

Walk 30 feet to the next station, grasp the 175-pound victim (dummy) around the chest and drag it 100 feet. To do so, lock your fingers and hands around the dummy's torso and lift with your legs, rather than your back. This task is complete when the feet of the mannequin cross the finish line.

HEALTH METRICS, INC.

Figure 2
North County Firefighter
Physical Ability Test
(San Marcos Tower)