

**Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry
Forestry Services
Standard Operational Policies & Procedures**

Section: Personnel Effective Date: 7/1/2014

Subject: Fitness and Work
Capacity Testing Date Modified: 1/26/17

Policy Number: 2.3 Approved by: 

Policy Title: Fitness and Work Capacity Testing

Policy Overview:

Fitness and health of Oklahoma Forestry Services' (OFS) firefighters is of utmost importance to ensure the safety of all personnel working on the fire line.

Governing Regulations:

Wildland firefighter fitness standards are governed by [Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide \(PMS 310-1\)](#) published by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The Guide describes four fitness categories: Arduous, Moderate, Light and None and assigns one category as the standard for positions identified in the guide.

The Work Capacity Tests for Wildland Firefighters (WCT) are described in the "Work Capacity Test Administrator's Guide," April 2003, NWCG Publication Management System PMS 307, NFES 11092. However, as updated versions of the WCT Administrator's Guide become available they will supersede the April 2003 version.

Policy Statements:

2.3.1 General

2.3.1.1 The Work Capacity Test (WCT) is the primary means to assess the fitness level of firefighters.

2.3.1.2 The following positions are authorized WCT administrators:

- a. State Fire Management Chief
- b. Forester V (Area Foresters)
- c. Forester IV (Fire Management Staff Foresters)
- d. Individuals designated in writing by the State Forester or Fire Management Chief

2.3.1.3 The WCT will be administered twice per year. The required test will be administered October 1 through December 15, and an optional WCT at the arduous level will be

administered April 1 through June 30. The Spring test establishes eligibility for certain out-of-state interagency assignments during the spring and summer fire seasons.

2.3.1.3 The WCT will be administered and recorded in accordance with the [Work Capacity Test Administrator’s Guide](#) and procedure described within this document. Employees should be notified at least eight weeks prior to the testing so they may prepare as necessary (conditioning and medical screening). The notification letter will direct employees to fill out the [Health Screening Questionnaire](#) (HSQ) immediately. Prior to the test date, the WCT administrator will provide a list of employees scheduled for the test through chain-of-command to the State Fire Management Chief and State Forester for approval.

2.3.2 Applicability

2.3.2.1 All firefighters and other personnel (including but not limited to the Forester Job Family) with fire suppression or prescribed fire responsibilities ***hired on or after 1 July 2014*** are required to maintain a current WCT fitness level to perform their duties. The WCT is optional for firefighters and other personnel hired prior to 1 July 2014; **however WCT completion is strongly encouraged and supported with incentive described below.**

2.3.2.2 Firefighters are defined as budgeted employees whose position description identifies fire suppression as an essential duty, primarily the Forest Ranger job family.

2.3.2.3 If a new employee ***hired on or after 1 July 2014*** has previously passed the WCT administered by a recognized state or federal agency within the same OFS test periods (Fall or Spring), those results will be accepted by OFS. To qualify for the fitness incentive (as described in Section 6.2), the test must have been passed during employment with OFS and within one of the OFS test periods.

2.3.3 Work Capacity Testing and Criteria

2.3.3.1 There are three fitness levels assigned by work capacity testing:

- a. Arduous – for positions involving fieldwork that calls for above-average endurance and superior conditioning.
- b. Moderate – for positions involving fieldwork requiring complete control of physical faculties and may include considerable walking, standing and lifting 25-50 pounds.
- c. Light – for positions involving occasional field duty.

2.3.3.2 Criteria for each fitness level are as follows:

Fitness Level / Work Category	Test	Distance (miles)	Pack (pounds)	Time (minutes)
Arduous	Pack	3	45	45
Moderate	Field	2	25	30
Light	Walk	1	None	16

2.3.3.3 The WCT administrator is responsible for submitting, by email, the completed [WCT and Firefighter Certification Data Sheet](#) to the Fire Management Chief and Fire Protection Staff Forester. The data will then be entered into the Incident Qualification System data base.

2.3.4 Requirements

- 2.3.4.1 All firefighters hired after 1 July 2014 must maintain an **arduous** fitness level as a requirement of employment.
- 2.3.4.2 New employees will have thirty days after their first day on duty to pass the Work Capacity Test at the Arduous level. Conditions found in Section 9 of this Policy will apply if a new employee fails the Work Capacity Test.
- 2.3.4.3 For interagency fire assignments outside of Oklahoma or Southern Interstate Forest Fire Protection Compact, employees must meet the applicable fitness level listed by position in Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1).

2.3.5 Physical Fitness and Incentives Programs

- 2.3.5.1 The provisions of the physical fitness and incentive programs do not apply to seasonal and part-time employees.
- 2.3.5.2 As an incentive to promote fitness and as budgets allow, a pair of wildland firefighter boots (White's Smokejumper Boots or equivalent) will be provided to each firefighter that successfully completes the WCT at the arduous level for three consecutive years. Boots will not be given to individuals for passing the WCT at the light or moderate fitness level.
- 2.3.5.3 To assist firefighters in achieving and maintaining a higher fitness level, OFS provides an opportunity to conduct physical training at the rate of one hour per day, three days per week, unless in travel status, during emergency response, when required to be on a dispatch point during fire duty (Class 3 or above as described in the *OFS Wildfire Dispatch Plan, page 2, Table 1 Manning and Action Guides*), while on leave, or as determined by the State Fire Management Chief, State Forester or designee. The physical fitness program will be managed by the chain of command. Employees are encouraged to train together. Employees will review and utilize the USDA Forest Service [WCT Brochure](#) or the NWCG FireFit program as a guide in developing their training regimen.
- 2.3.5.4 Employee training locations will be approved by their immediate supervisor.

2.3.6 Guidelines

- 2.3.6.1 Detailed guidance for conducting the WCT is found in the Work Capacity Test Administrator's Guide.
- 2.3.6.2 At least one emergency medical technician (EMT) must be on-site from start to finish. It is recommended to have at least one EMT for every 20 participants. A person may not take the test while serving as an on-site EMT. It is also recommended that an

ambulance and an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) be on site throughout the test.

- 2.3.6.3 If an employee fails the WCT, a minimum of 72 hours must pass before attempting to re-take the WCT in order that required emergency medical personnel can be scheduled to be on-site.
- 2.3.6.4 Participants for the pack or field test are responsible for bringing a pack or weight vest with the appropriate weight for the test. Each pack or vest will be weighed by the WCT administrator prior to and after the test.

2.3.7 Medical Screening

- 2.3.7.1 At the beginning of August, each applicable employee must fill out an HSQ. This must be done prior to conditioning for or taking the WCT. All HSQs will be collected by the appropriate supervisor and sent through the chain of command to the State Fire Management Chief for review and filing.
- 2.3.7.2 Only one HSQ must be completed annually unless there is a change in the employee's health or the employee's physician directs the employee to return prior to taking the spring WCT. Employees who have had a change in medical condition since the previous WCT must have medical clearance forms clearing them for the WCT completed by their physician. The medical clearance forms must be sent or e-mailed to the Fire Management Chief prior to the WCT.
- 2.3.7.3 The chain of command will review each HSQ. The chain of command will determine whether an employee is cleared to start conditioning and take the WCT or requires further medical evaluation. If further medical evaluation is required, OFS will reimburse full-time employees for any out of pocket costs incurred (i.e., co-payments).
- 2.3.7.4 Employees requiring medical evaluation must have their personal health care professionals complete the [Wildland Firefighter Medical Clearance Form](#) prior to taking the WCT. This form, when completed, will be forwarded to the Fire Management Chief for review and filing at least a week prior to the test date. If this is not possible, the individual's test date should be adjusted.
- 2.3.7.5 Each WCT participant will also sign a [Work Capacity Test: Informed Consent](#) form. This form will be collected by the WCT administrator on test day.

2.3.8 Failure of Employee hired after 1 July 2014 to meet fitness level requirement

- 2.3.8.1 Employee not medically cleared to take the WCT: The employee will be evaluated to determine if he/she can perform all requirements of the job.
- 2.3.8.2 Employee fails the first WCT: The employee will be given 60 days to retake the test.
- 2.3.8.3 Employee fails the second WCT: The employee will be given an additional 60 days to retake the test.
- 2.3.8.4 Employee fails the third WCT: The employee will be evaluated and have his/her job status reviewed by the chain of command/Human Resources and subject to termination.

2.3.9 WCT Retake

- 2.3.9.1 The supervisor of an employee failing a WCT will coordinate with a WCT administrator to reschedule a follow-up WCT.
- 2.3.9.2 The WCT retake will be supervised by an authorized WCT administrator (see Section 2).
- 2.3.9.3 The WCT retake has the same administrative requirements, but can be conducted individually if the proposed location, date, time or administrative requirements for a consolidated retake make it unfeasible.