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**Date:** October 9, 2020

**To:** State Board of Fire Services  
Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee

**From:** Scott Vail  
Mark Bisbee, Battalion Chief - Training Specialist

**SUBJECT/AGENDA ACTION ITEM:**  
CICCS Physical Fitness Description

**Recommended Actions:**  
Approve the Proposed CICCS Physical Fitness Description

**Background Information:**

In 2009, Cal Chiefs and Firescope requested the CICCS Task Force review alternatives to determine fitness for positions within CICCS. This after Cal OES, Cal Chiefs and California Professional Firefighters published a policy statement with concerns regarding the National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG) Pack Test.

In addition, since CICCS identifies the Fire Chief as having the final authority and responsibility for determining fitness, fire chiefs were looking for an industry standard that could be utilized.

A Physical Fitness committee was formed with membership from agencies that represented both small and large departments, labor and management, and members who had expertise in physical fitness.

The direction of the committee was to conduct research and develop a recommendation that would determine an individual's ability to perform within a specific ICS position based on health and fitness of the firefighter.

In an effort to meet the direction given, committee members took a look at existing programs and documents being utilized. This included programs being used by local agencies, NFPA 1582/1583, and the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative.

After all the research was completed, the committee developed the following recommendations:

1. All agencies participating in CICCIS utilize the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative as a model for their organization.
2. The Fire Chief has the authority and responsibility to determine and approve that individuals qualified meet the physical fitness requirements outlined in CICCIS.

At a minimum, agencies should adopt a comprehensive program that included the following three components:

1. Baseline Medical Evaluation.
2. A comprehensive wellness and fitness program.
3. An evaluation tool to determine that an individual can meet the physical demands for the position that they are being qualified for as outlined in the CICCIS guide.

#### **Analysis/Summary of Issue:**

The current CICCIS guide identifies the three minimum components as outlined by the CICCIS Physical Fitness Committee, including:

- Baseline medical Evaluation
- A Comprehensive Wellness and Fitness Program
- An evaluation tool to determine that an individual can meet the physical demands for the position that they are being qualified for as outlined in the CICCIS guide.

It also includes the recommendation that the Fire Chief has the authority and responsibility to approve qualified individuals.

However, missing from the current CICCIS Guidelines is the recommendation for participating agencies to utilize the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative. This recommendation is important for a couple of reasons.

First, it is consistent with the Joint Letter distributed by California Office of Emergency Services-Fire Branch, California Fire Chiefs Association and California Professional Firefighters.

In addition, the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative is updated every few years by a joint IAFC and IAFF committee. This is essential because it keeps the document current with industry, NFPA and medical standards.

CICCIS recommends that STEAC adopt language identifying the IAFF/IAFC WFI as a model for agencies participating in CICCIS as recommended by the Physical Fitness Sub-Committee.

Attached:

1. Proposed language for CICCS Physical Fitness
2. OES, CFC, CPF Joint Letter regarding the Pack Test

## **Physical Fitness Recommendations**

### Background

In the Fall of 2009, Cal Chiefs and Firescope requested the CICCIS Task Force review alternatives to determine fitness for positions within CICCIS. This after, Cal EMA, Cal Chiefs and California Professional Firefighters published a policy statement with concerns regarding the NWCG Pack Test.

In addition, since CICCIS identifies the Fire Chief as having the final authority and responsibility for determining fitness, fire chiefs were looking for an industry standard that could be utilized.

A Physical Fitness committee was formed with membership from agencies that represented both small and large departments, labor and management, and members who had expertise in physical fitness.

### Committee Work

The direction for the committee was to conduct research and develop a recommendation that would determine an individual's ability to perform within a specific ICS position based on health and fitness of the firefighter.

In an effort to meet the direction given, committee members took a look at existing programs and documents being utilized. This included the Santa Ana program being used by several agencies in Southern California, other programs and studies available, NFPA 1582/1583, and the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative.

There was much discussion on the need for a comprehensive program that had the following three components:

1. Baseline Medical Evaluation
2. A Comprehensive Wellness and Fitness Program
3. An evaluation tool to determine that an individual can meet the physical demands for the position that they are being qualified for as outlined in the CICCIS guide.

### Committee Recommendation

After all the research was completed the committee developed the following recommendations:

1. All agencies participating in CICCIS utilize the IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative as a model for their organization.
2. The Fire Chief has the authority and responsibility to determine and approve that individuals qualified meet the physical fitness requirements outlined in CICCIS.

### Committee Members

A special word of appreciation for the committee members that volunteered their time and efforts in a program that will contribute for a safer and healthier fire service. While reaching consensus can be difficult when discussing such an important topic, each committee member recognized the significance of the program and had the welfare for the fire service members in determining their final decision. The committee members included:

Mark Bisbee	Watsonville Fire Department
David Burke	Burbank Fire Department
Chris Celia	San Mateo Fire Department
Kevin Dugan	Alameda County Fire Department
Jeremy Frazier	Glendale Fire Department
Ken Harrison	CSFA/Orange County Fire Authority
Kevin Klarr	Los Angeles County Fire Department
Tom Marchant	Glendale Fire Department
Tony Miller	Pasadena Fire Department
Dr. Sue Rodearmeal	Cal State University East Bay
TJ Welch	Alameda County Fire Department
Kevin White	California Professional Firefighters



**CA Emergency  
Management Agency  
Fire and Rescue**



**California Fire  
Chiefs Association**



**California  
Professional  
Firefighters**

April 8, 2009

**TO: ALL INTERESTED PARTIES**  
**FROM: Kim Zagaris, Cal EMA Fire and Rescue Chief**  
**Sheldon Gilbert, President, California Fire Chiefs Assn.**  
**Lou Paulson, President, California Professional Firefighters**  
**RE: CA FIRE SERVICE POLICY STATEMENT ON PACK TEST**

From time to time questions arise concerning the “Pack Test” for physical readiness of firefighters; there is confusion on the purpose of the test, the need for the test and the effectiveness of the test. We are issuing this letter in the hopes of clarifying the issues that surround the test which include labor-management relations and the affect on the statewide Mutual Aid system.

The *National Interagency Incident Management System Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1* (310-1) establishes the minimum requirement for physical fitness levels for wildland firefighting positions for the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The NWCG uses the “Pack Test” to demonstrate this level of work capacity.

The Pack Test is not intended to be a standard that demonstrates that an incumbent firefighter is “fit for duty”. Rather, the Pack Test is used by federal agencies to evaluate the fitness of an individual who is a candidate to be considered for employment specifically for wildland firefighting. *The Pack Test is a measure of an individual's “work capacity”, not their ability to do his or her job successfully.*

The Pack Test is a “functional capacity evaluation”. It falls short of the NFPA firefighter fitness standards (1021, 1051, 1582 and 1583) and The Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI) in determining firefighter fitness for duty and ability to complete the job successfully.

In 310-1, regarding qualifications, it states, “The NWCG recognizes the ability of cooperating agencies at the local level to jointly define and accept each other’s qualifications for initial attack, extended attack, large fire operations and prescribed fire.”

Fire departments impose a false sense of security that is tied to the Pack Test as an indicator of fitness for duty. In some cases, fire chiefs have determined that the Pack Test is a requirement for certification under the California Incident Command Certification System (CICCS). The Pack Test is not a determination of fitness for duty and, physical fitness is not part of CICCS criteria.

Under NWCG policy and CICCS procedure, it is the fire chief that makes the decision on the fitness of the firefighters in his or her department. The use of the Pack Test for this purpose amounts to an incumbent performance issue. This begs the question, what constitutes incumbent firefighter fitness for duty?

The big issue regarding the Pack Test or other “fit for duty” physical evaluation is what to do for the firefighters who do not “pass” the test. The International Association of Firefighters and International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFF/IAFC) WFI Task Force maintains the position that “the failure of an incumbent firefighter demonstrates the fire department’s (including labor, management and the individual) inability to prepare and/or maintain training skill and conditioning to perform the job specific functions required for fire department operations.”

There are no consensus standards or validated performance standards that have been developed for incumbent firefighters. In this case, physical fitness is a better predictor of successful job completion rather than physical performance. A performance test without an accompanying fitness program is worthless.

Performance tests, including the Pack Test, have an acceptable (pass) time for completion of a task. The assumption in establishing pass/fail based on performance is that a shorter time to completion demonstrates successful job completion. However, speed is not a predictor of success; a task performed too fast may cause injuries.

Fire chiefs can establish performance tests. Imposing the standard will alter working conditions. After the standards are set, the effect of the standards on working conditions may have to be negotiated with the labor groups. What will be done with those firefighters who fail to meet the standards? Again, a performance test without an accompanying fitness program is worthless.

Rather than an arbitrary demonstration of work capacity, fire departments should follow nationally established standards that have been endorsed by the international parent organizations for both management and labor.

The implementation of the Pack Test will also create a patchwork of requirements that could affect the statewide mutual aid system. If some departments require the Pack Test before they respond in mutual aid situations, this will create an artificial barrier that could delay or even preclude departments from responding. Additionally if certain departments are requiring the Pack Test for their personnel are they going to require automatic or mutual aid resources to also have the Pack Test completed before responding to fire events in their jurisdiction? These questions and others need to be addressed as quickly as practical as to not disrupt the current response system,

The California fire service must implement and maintain a physical fitness standard that is driven by *verifiable* medical criteria and a process that evaluates each firefighter based on their expected job performance. The firefighter fitness programs should be positive in approach and not punitive.

The WFI is a complete medical, physical fitness and wellness program package. It is fully developed and continually evaluated for effectiveness in maintaining firefighters' physical and mental capabilities. These recommendations are referenced in NFPA standards 1021, 1582 and 1583.

The IAFF, through formal policy, recommends that physical fitness programs emphasize the general health benefits to the firefighter as well as benefits to the fire department.

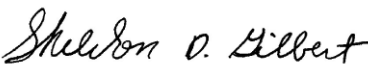
The IAFC endorses the Wellness-Fitness Initiative with these specific goals:

- *Overcome the historic fire service punitive mentality of physical fitness and wellness issues;*
- *Move beyond negative timed, task-based performance testing to progressive wellness improvement;*
- *Require a commitment by labor and management to a positive individualized fitness/wellness program; and*
- *Develop a holistic wellness approach that includes: medical, fitness, injury/fitness/medical rehabilitation and behavioral health.*

The California fire service will do well to adopt the same goals regarding firefighter fitness. This will provide a measureable and verifiable fitness standard for all firefighters for their local jurisdiction as well as responding to statewide mutual aid needs.

To implement non-specific work capacity tests, such as the Pack Test, circumvents a legitimate physical fitness program from which the fire department will maximize the safety of the firefighters.

  
**Kim Zagaris**  
Cal EMA Fire and Rescue Chief

  
**Sheldon Gilbert**  
President, California Fire Chiefs Assn.

  
**Lou Paulson**  
President, California Professional Firefighters

## **Physical Fitness**

Personnel must meet established physical health and fitness demands for the specific ICS position to which they are assigned. The Fire Chief has the authority and responsibility to determine and approve that individuals are qualified to meet the physical fitness requirements outlined in CICCS. Once an individual meets the criteria for the specific position, it is deemed that the individual meets the health and fitness levels outlined by CICCS.

In an effort to ensure individual safety, CICCS recommends that all Departments/Agencies utilize the IAFF/IAFC Joint Labor/Management Wellness Fitness Initiative, which includes the following health and fitness components:

- Baseline Medical Evaluation
- A Comprehensive Wellness and Fitness Program
- An evaluation tool to determine that an individual can meet the physical demands for the position that they are being qualified for as outlined.

CICCS identifies four (4) levels of health and fitness required for position qualification. The health and fitness levels are defined as outlined below:

**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 and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.

**Moderate Duties** involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

**Light Duties** mainly involve office-type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

**None** Required Positions that do not require a physical fitness level.

Link to IAFF/IAFC Joint Labor/Management Wellness Fitness Initiative

[https://www.iafc.org/docs/default-source/1safehealthshs/wfi-manual.pdf?sfvrsn=7931df0d\\_5](https://www.iafc.org/docs/default-source/1safehealthshs/wfi-manual.pdf?sfvrsn=7931df0d_5)