

Subject: Work Capacity Test Implementation Guide 2008

To: Forest Supervisors, FFMO's

The purpose of this letter is to provide Regional guidance for administering the Work Capacity Test (WCT) and Health Screening Questionnaire for the 2008 field season in the Southwestern Region and provide further clarification on those items that have changed the most since 2007. This accompanies the WO letter dated February 8, 2008 and 2008 Work Capacity Test Implementation Guide.

The procedures that have been implemented over the past year have had a significant impact on the Region, Forests, Districts and Albuquerque Service Center, Human Capital Management. Recognizing the need to revise the process, Fire and Aviation Management in conjunction with the Federation of Federal Employees and Human Capital Management have worked together in order to finalize the 2008 Work Capacity Test Implementation Guide. These same organizations will remain actively engaged to ensure that the Work Capacity Test continues to be safely and effectively implemented across the Forest Service.

The following items are those that have changed the most since 2007 and the Health Screening Questionnaire procedures needing special attention and further discussion with all fire and aviation management personnel:

- Each Forest (and Districts if applicable) will identify a primary HSQ Coordinator and alternate HSQ Coordinator who will be responsible for ensuring that all HSQ's are properly completed, reviewed, processed and filed at the unit level for all individuals, including casual hires (ADs).
- The HSQ Coordinators must complete a 'Confidentiality Agreement for Work with Medical Records' prior to administering this program. The signed Confidentiality Agreements are to be maintained at the local unit level with a copy faxed to ASC-HCM at 505-563-9991 or as otherwise instructed.
 - The HSQ Coordinator does not have a Human Resources role; their job is to process the HSQ forms, make determinations based on established criteria, and ensure that employees move through the process in a timely and efficient manner.
 - The HSQ Coordinator is also responsible for ensuring that Informed Consent forms are also on file for all employees who will be taking a Work Capacity Test.
- If the employees' responses on the HSQ form indicate a need for physical examination, then the HSQ Coordinator provides the employee with the standard physician's letter and SF-78 for the appropriate fitness level (arduous, moderate, light) and assist the employee to get the medical exam as needed.
 - The HSQ Coordinator will immediately fax a copy of the completed HSQ to ASC-HCM with a cover sheet (marked "CONFIDENTIAL Medical Information") including e-mail address, name/unit, phone number of coordinator and employee. The confidential ASC-HCM fax numbers are 505-563-9991 and 9992.
- All original completed HSQ forms for all employees (both those who require physical examination and those who did not) should be mailed to ASC-HCM on a quarterly basis. Prior to mailing these forms to ASC, they must be kept in a secure, locked location with limited public access.

- Completed HSQ forms for casual (AD) employees should not be sent to ASC-HCM, but rather are to be field in a secure manner at the local level with the employee's other hiring documents.
- Once a completed SF-78 is received at ASC-HCM, the form will be examined to determine if the physician has indicated that the employee should proceed with fitness training and Work Capacity Testing or not. ASC-HCM will then notify the employee and HSQ Coordinator of the status via email.
- There will only be one (1) Health Screening Questionnaire (FS-5100-31/OMB 0596-0164) used for all Forest Service employees including casual (AD) hires.
- Fire Program Mangers must provide employees with appropriate WCT preparation information to ensure all employees are adequately prepared to take the WCT. Adequate time must also be provided to employees for appropriate physical conditioning.
 - Those required to pass the WCT normally will be informed at least four (4) weeks prior to the scheduled test date, to allow time for fitness training, as needed.
 - The recruitment notice will provide information relating to the WCT and will serve as the notice.

Although the process has changed, there should not be much added impact to the Forests and Units other than administrative duties required of the HSQ Coordinators. It will be important for all individuals involved in the new process to maintain good communications and collaboration to ensure the process is completed in a timely and efficient matter.

Upon Regional implementation of the 'Interagency Medical Standards Qualifications Program' (MSP) in 2009, the process will change yet again. However, there will still be a need to maintain the HSQ Coordinators whose duties might include MSP administration as well, since they will be similar in nature. Those processes will be discussed as length during 2008 in preparation for MSP implementation.

Although the Regional Fire Directors are responsible for the oversight of the Work Capacity Test administration within their Regions, it will be the duty of every employee to be personally responsible for maintaining their personal health and wellness. All employees engaged in wildland firefighting activities are responsible for maintaining fitness levels sufficient to withstand the rigors of wildland firefighting. It is their responsibility to answer the required documentation truthfully and take responsibility for acquiring the needed training to maintain their qualifications.

Each individual is responsible for their own physical condition and health. No amount of health screening or medical examination can absolutely ensure an individual's safety during a work capacity test or fire management activities. Employees are encouraged to maintain a high level of fitness year-round through a personal fitness program such as 'FireFit' (<http://www.nifc.gov/FireFit/index.htm>) and "Fitness and Work Capacity – 2nd edition".

Information regarding the Work Capacity Test or Health Screening Questionnaire can be found at: http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/wct/wct_index.html . Questions regarding the Work Capacity Test procedures including the Health Screening Questionnaire for the Region can be directed to Bequi Livingston, Fire and Aviation Management Staff, at 505/842-3412 or blivingston@fs.fed.us.

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