



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

P1815(2653)

JUN 24 1999

Memorandum

To: Directorate, Field Directorate, and Superintendents
Attn: Park Superintendents

From: Associate Director, Administration *See to Monica*
Acting Associate Director, Park Operations and Education *Robert [Signature]*

Subject: Implementation of RM-57 for Fire Management Personnel

Reference Manual 57, "Occupational Medical Standards and Physical Fitness", Part 1 was issued April 26, 1999. Subsequent questions have arisen which require clarification regarding wildland fire management implementation.

Director's Order 57, referencing maximum entry and mandatory separation dates, state "...the mandatory separation age is applicable to all appointments, no applicant may receive a temporary, term, or seasonal appointment at or after.....age 55 for designated firefighter positions." While this direction is clear regarding employees covered under special fire and law enforcement retirement (commonly referred to as "6c"), confusion exists as to its applicability to collateral duty fire positions.

The term "designated firefighter positions" in this context includes all positions covered under enhanced annuity fire retirement and those collateral duty, non-6c covered employees who actually fight fire on the fireline. As defined by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's "Wildland Fire Qualification Subsystem Guide, PMS 310-1", these are employees assigned "arduous" physical fitness positions, such as Firefighter (FFT2), Crew Boss (CRWB), and Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS). "Arduous" duty positions require successful completion of the Pack Test component of the Work Capacity Test Series. Other collateral duty wildland firefighting positions having "moderate", "low" or "none" physical fitness requirements are not included in this directive.

Recognizing that this may cause a hardship on some individuals and park fire programs this fire season, implementation of this directive is deferred until January 1, 2000; collateral duty employees older than 55 who have previously been assigned arduous

firefighting duties may continue to be assigned those duties until January 1, 2000, assuming they meet Pack Test and medical examination standards.

RM-57 outlines an approved medical examination program “whenever specific, approved medical standards for such work exist”, and specifically spells out the procedures to be followed for the NPS law enforcement examination program. RM-18, “Wildland Fire Management, Chapter 3, Safety” indicates that interagency wildland fire medical standards are currently under development, and that long-existing NPS fire medical standards (using the SF-78 form) and periodicity of examinations should continue to be utilized, pending the completion and adoption of the interagency medical standards.

This has led to potential confusion: Which examination program to follow for employees who have both law enforcement AND arduous firefighter duties? Do such employees have to take two separate medical exams?

Only one medical examination is required. To facilitate the one examination for multi-functional employees, the new law enforcement medical examination form is being modified to address key firefighter considerations, as identified in the existing SF-78. This revised form will be distributed to the field as soon as possible. Additionally, the periodicity of exams for multi-functional employees should follow the most restrictive guidelines (law enforcement, in this example).

For those employees requiring only firefighter examinations, the existing SF-78 form and process as outlined in RM-18 will continue to be utilized, until revised with new interagency medical standards. These new standards will be included in RM-57 when appropriate.

Costs of medical examinations for multi-functional positions will be borne by that function having primacy in the employee’s position description. In other words, if the position is established primarily for fire management duties (and the position requires maintenance of arduous duty fire qualifications), and the employee is required to maintain a law enforcement commission, FIREPRO will pay the medical examination costs. Conversely, if the employee is a law enforcement ranger who is also required to maintain a Red Card for arduous duty fire qualifications, Ranger Activities Division in the Headquarters Office will fund the examination costs.

If you have further questions, contact your Regional Fire Management Officer; Terrie Fajardo, Chief Staffing and Compensation, 202-208-6288; or Paul Broyles, National Fire Operations, 208-387-5226.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERAGENCY WILDLAND FIRE
MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS STANDARDS PROGRAM
PACIFIC NORTHWEST GEOGRAPHIC AREA**

The following guidance is provided to you in order to support the implementation process.

Examination Form Completion Requirements: The physical examination forms, located at <http://medical.smis.doi.gov/nifcmedicalstds.htm> replace any existing forms your agency uses (e.g. the SF-78). The website contains two forms that will be used in FY03 in the Northwest Geographic Area (Washington, Oregon):

- 1) **Exam Form:** The Exam Form is to be completed by all permanent (PFT, WAE, and Term) employees who perform wildland fire duties with an arduous fitness requirement. The initial examination using this form is known as the "Baseline Exam". The Baseline Exam is the most comprehensive occupational medical evaluation the firefighter will receive, and is completed only once in the firefighter's career. Subsequent physical examinations using the Exam Form are known as "Periodic Exams," and are required at intervals depending on age. The "Periodic Exam" is completed every 5 years until the age of 45, then every three years thereafter.

The "Periodic Exam" is also completed initially at age 45 then every 3 years thereafter for Temporary (Temps) employees and AD/EFF.

NOTE: NPS employees who are both law enforcement officers and arduous duty firefighters will complete only the law enforcement medical examination and will follow the law enforcement medical standards procedures. Copies of completed law enforcement examination forms will be mailed to the Central Medical Consultant (CMC).

- 2) **Annual Form:** The Annual Form is used only by arduous level firefighters under age 45 who do not meet the employment categories identified above. This would include all Temp employees and AD/EFF classifications. The Annual Form includes a self-disclosure of medical history and a medical screening to be completed by a licensed health care professional.

Work Capacity Testing: The applicable examination forms must be completed and clearance granted prior to the administration of the approved work capacity test (i.e. "the pack test"). The work capacity test must only be administered when the licensed health care provider or physician has made a determination of no significant medical findings.

Responsibilities:

- 1) **Unit Manager:** The Unit Manager is responsible for:
 1. Providing the Exam Form (Baseline) to permanent employees.
 2. Providing the Exam Form (Periodic) to Temp employees and AD/EFF greater than 45 years of age.

3. Providing the Annual Form to Temp employees and AD/EFF less than 45 years of age.
4. Submitting via secure webpage a request for medical examination/screening for both permanent and temporary employees. The private medical provider's secure webpage, passwords, and training will be forwarded to the Unit Manager once a nationwide contract is awarded.
5. Completing the instructions found on the front page of the Exam Form and the Annual Form under the section titled "Fire Management Office(r)" prior to providing the form to permanent or temporary employees.

2) Servicing Personnel Office (SPO): The SPO is responsible for:

1. Mailing out the Exam Form to applicants for permanent and term employment. It is a pre-placement hiring requirement that all new permanent hires receive a baseline medical examination using the Exam Form. This requirement will be addressed in the vacancy announcement for all fire positions that require arduous level assignments.
2. Mailing out the Annual Form (or Periodic Exam form if applicant is older than 45 years of age) to applicants for temporary employment. It is a hiring requirement that all new temporary hires receive a pre-employment medical examination/screening. This requirement will be addressed in the vacancy announcement for all fire positions that require arduous level assignments.
3. Reviewing position descriptions to incorporate functions and work conditions of an arduous duty wildland firefighter described on page 2 of 16 in the Exam Form. An updated DI-625 for collateral duty wildland firefighters is located at the website <http://medical.smis.doi.gov/nifcmedicalstds.htm>.
4. Including instructions for the firefighter that address completing the Exam Form (Periodic Exam) or Annual Form.
5. Submitting via secure webpage a request for medical examination/screening for the applicant. The private medical provider's secure webpage, passwords, and training will be forwarded to the SPO once a nationwide contract is awarded.
6. Completing the instructions found on the front page of the Exam Form under the section titled "Personnel Office" or on the Annual Form under the section titled "Fire Management Officer" prior to providing the form to permanent or temporary applicants.

3) Examining Physician: The examining physician is responsible for:

1. Completing the Exam Form or Annual Form for each firefighter. If the examining physician has any questions related to form completion they are instructed to contact the nationwide private medical provider.
2. Mailing the completed form via overnight carrier (e. g. Fed Ex) to the nationwide private medical provider's Central Medical Consultant (CMC).
3. Coordinate with the nationwide private medical provider for reimbursement.

4) Licensed Health Care Professional: The Licensed Health Care Professional (LHCP) is responsible for:

1. Conducting medical screenings for AD/EFF & Temp employees using the Annual Form.
 2. Assessing and providing a determination to the local FMO regarding the firefighter's ability to participate in arduous duty wildland firefighting and participate in the work capacity test by completing the clearance sheet, page 6 of 6, in the Annual Form.
 3. Mailing the completed medical form via overnight carrier (e.g. Fed Ex) to the CMC.
- 5) Central Medical Consultant: The CMC is responsible for:
1. Reviewing every Exam Form. The CMC will provide clearance notification to FMO or SPO via the secure webpage. If the examination yields a determination of significant medical findings, the CMC will coordinate with the firefighter and obtain additional medical information in an effort to obtain clearance at the arduous level. If after receiving additional medical information the CMC cannot provide clearance, the CMC will prepare a summary of medical findings and recommendations which will be evaluated by an Interagency Medical Review Board in determining whether any waiver and/or reasonable accommodation is feasible.
 2. Obtaining data evaluation metrics information from all examination forms, which will further program evaluation.
- 6) Employees (PFT, WAE, Term, or AD/EFF & Temp): The employees are responsible for:
1. Completing the medical history portion of the appropriate medical examination form prior to an appointment with a LHCP or physician.
 2. Once notified by the nationwide private medical provider, keeping the scheduled appointment with the LHCP or physician.

In summary, the Medical Qualifications Standards implementation will commence in the Northwest Geographic Area, beginning October 1, 2002 and involve all DOI wildland fire agencies. A training session for FMOs, Human Resources Officers, and Human Resources Specialists on program implementation will occur early November 2002. Specific training dates, locations, and times will be forwarded at a later date. We greatly appreciate your participation in this program and look forward to successful implementation, which will help protect the safety and health of federal wildland firefighters. If you have specific implementation questions, please contact the Interagency Medical Standards Program Manager, Kevin Jensen, at 303-236-7130 x231 or email kevin_jensen@fws.gov or the NPS Wildland Fire Safety and Prevention Specialist, Al King at 208-387-5967 or email al_king@nps.gov.