

ANTIETAM NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

HEALTH AND FITNESS
PROGRAM

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I. Introduction

NOTE: The implementation of this program should begin as soon as possible, however, the first physical fitness test will not be required until April 1, 1986.

The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for the safety and welfare of visitors and employees and for the protection of park resources.

In many occupations, the daily level of physical exertion is predictable. NPS personnel, however, are assigned a variety of public and resource protection duties in which there is minimal physical activity for extended periods of time, and then suddenly and unpredictably they are called upon to exert a critical amount of physical and mental energy. Employees commonly respond to emergency situations that require great physical exertion which causes mental stress, and requires great demands on their physical capacity. Experience has shown that employees who are not physically fit may not have the strength, stamina and/or mental alertness to protect themselves, visitors, co-workers, or to complete assigned and required tasks in a safe and timely manner.

Good physical conditioning provides confidence to the employee who is reacting to and handling stress, both physical and mental, during emergency situations. For example, the ability to use a controlled-emotion approach to law enforcement problem solving, as well as the capacity for timely, lowest effective level of self-defense, is dependent on the employees physical condition and confidence.

Employees who are assigned search and rescue, emergency medical, wildland and structural fire suppression, scuba, lifeguard and law enforcement duties have major responsibilities. In these instances, physical fitness is often the factor that determines success or failure and may mean the difference between life or death to employees or visitors. Employees lacking the muscular strength and endurance so necessary to cope successfully with these situations are not adequately prepared to discharge their duties. They may also jeopardize their own life or health if they overextend themselves while working beyond their capacity. It is wrong for the government to place a physically unfit employee into a situation that could imperil that employee's health. The government could also be held liable for such action.

The health and fitness of its employees is of critical importance to the accomplishment of the overall NPS mission. It is recognized that, in addition to the obvious benefits during emergency situations, the health and fitness of employees bring other benefits to the government in terms of increased job efficiency, reduced sick leave, fewer employee injuries, fewer disability retirements and higher morale. The cost of instituting and maintaining an effective Servicewide Health and Fitness program is far less than paying for disability retirement benefits, inefficient employees, tort claims for failure to carry out responsibilities during emergencies, sick leave, etc.

NPS-57, Health and Fitness Policy and Guideline, should be available in December 1985. It established both a mandatory and voluntary Servicewide

Health and Fitness Program. The goal is to improve and maintain employee health and fitness levels so that the responsibilities of the NPS can be carried out more efficiently and without undue health risks to employees. Additionally, the Service expects to reduce the use of sick leave, have fewer employee injuries and fewer disability retirements. The program places the burden of fitness on individual employees and places the responsibility of ensuring that fitness levels are attained and maintained for arduous duties on the employee and management.

II. Authority

There are numerous laws, regulations, guidelines and policies listed in Appendix A which emphasize the need for Federal agencies to adopt occupational health and safety programs relating to the prevention of injury, illness and disease. These references authorize the National Park Service and the park to develop, promote and administer a program that will enhance the health and well-being of its employees.

III. Policy

The health and fitness of National Park Service employees are recognized as critical elements in a progressive personnel management program and in the effective administration of the National Park System. The NPS recognizes that employee physical fitness is job related and for employees to perform certain tasks safely and efficiently they must achieve and maintain a high level of physical fitness. The National Park Service will establish and maintain a health and fitness program for its personnel that considers two elements.

1. Mandatory minimum physical fitness standards and a testing program will be established for those employees who perform emergency service or arduous tasks. Fitness standards will help ensure that employees involved in these types of activities can safely perform their duties without undue risk to themselves, other employees, or visitors. All personnel assigned to emergency service duties will attain and maintain a high level of endurance, strength, and agility. Employees who perform search and rescue, emergency medical, structural and wildland fire suppression (including prescribed fire operations and natural fire monitoring), scuba, life-guard, and law enforcement, are required to meet or exceed physical fitness standards as established in NPS-57 (Health and Fitness Policy and Guideline). Employees who perform other duties (as determined by the Superintendent) which require a high level of physical exertion may also be required to meet these physical fitness standards. All employees required to take the physical fitness test will be allowed three hours of government time per week to exercise physically.
2. All other personnel will be encouraged to develop voluntary fitness programs to improve their health and fitness level. This in turn will benefit the government in terms of increased job efficiency and other related benefits.

IV. Guidelines

A. General

All personnel assigned to emergency service duties will be in such

physical condition that will allow them to discharge their duties in a safe and professional manner. The physical fitness level of these employees will be determined by a physical fitness test to be administered twice a year on government time.

Ideally, every emergency service employee would be tested for each task that might be encountered while performing duties, including lifting injured visitors, and running and then physically apprehending a suspect. However, it is not practical to test in this manner over 2,000 commissioned employees, spread throughout 335 park service areas, performing dozens of physical task law enforcement duties.

Therefore, a battery of tests has been established that will measure employee aerobic fitness, strength, and endurance. These exercises have been designed to determine minimum levels of fitness administratively and have been scientifically correlated to represent the minimum strength necessary to accomplish the preponderance of emergency tasks safely.

B. Fitness Test - Minimum Standard (effective January 1, 1986)

The mandatory minimum levels of physical fitness for law enforcement commissioned employees are:

Step Test (aerobic fitness)

Minimum score - 45
or 1½ mile run under 11 min. 40 sec.

Chin-Ups (arm and shoulder strength)

Body Weight	#Chin-ups
110 lbs.	6
110-135	5
135-175	4
175	3

Sit-Ups (abdominal endurance)

15 repetitions in 30 seconds
(bent knee, alternating elbow knee touch)

Push-Ups (arm and shoulder endurance)

20 repetitions in 60 seconds

(Alternate tests are being developed for use when employees have impairments that are beyond their control and which preclude their being tested against the established minimum standards.)

C. Testing Interval

Employees will be tested twice a year. The testing will be conducted once during the first quarter (October-December) and once during the third quarter (April-June). The first test will be administered between April 1, and June 30, 1986.

D. Testing Procedures

The Superintendent of each park is responsible for implementing a Health and Fitness Program for emergency service employees. (see NPS-57, available December 1985). As a part of that program a test administrator should be designated. The test administrator should be well versed in tests (both the 5 minute step test and the 1.5 mile run), procedures and purposes, and the material in the U.S. Forest Service, Fitness and Work Capacity testing handbook. Material in this booklet contains specific procedures and recommendations on:

Administration	Equipment
Endurance	Giving the test
Altitude	Scoring

The handbook will be available in NPS-57, Health and Fitness Guideline in December 1985.

V. Responsibility

Each participating employee is responsible for putting forth the personal effort to follow his/her personal fitness program as developed. Not only will the Service and the visitor benefit from the results, but the employee will enjoy life more.

VI. Personal Fitness Programs

Individual employees may develop any kind of fitness program they wish provided it focuses on increasing the individuals aerobic capacity, flexibility, strength, and endurance. The program should not utilize more than 3 hours of government time and is not to include recreational activities. Activities which are acceptable include jogging, cycling, calisthenics and fitness test practice. This is not to imply that other activities are unacceptable.

APPENDIX A

Physical Fitness Administrative Concerns

1. General authority for establishment of a physical fitness program.

a. P.L. 79-658 (5 U.S.C. 7901) authorized agency establishment of health service programs to promote and maintain the physical and mental fitness of Federal employees. Implementing guidelines are in OMB Circular A-72 of June 18, 1965, FPM Chapter 792-1, FPM Supplement 792-1, and FPM Letter 792-9, of May 23, 1979.

b. Chapter 79, Section 7901 U.S. Code:

"The head of each agency of the government of the United States may establish, within the limits of appropriations available, a health service program to promote and maintain the physical and mental fitness of employees under his jurisdiction. Such programs may be established by contract or otherwise and are limited to certain constraints, among them that they be preventive programs relating to health."

c. Circular Number A-72 from the Office of Management and Budget, (June 18, 1965):

"The health fitness of federal employees for efficient performance of their assigned work is an important element in a progressive personnel management system and in effective administration of federal programs. The head of each department and agency, therefore, will review existing programs and is authorized and encouraged to establish an occupational health program to deal constructively with the health of the employees of his department or agency in relation to their work."

d. Policy Statement of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, Physical Fitness Programs for Federal Employees (October 23, 1973):

"It is hereby recommended by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports that heads of agencies in the Federal government recognize the importance that the contributions of regular exercise can make to job performance as well as employee health and do whatever in their power to make provisions for federal employees to participate in either on-the-job exercise programs or exercise programs after duty hours. Exercise rooms, showering and dressing facilities should be provided wherever feasible."

e. "February 1, 1980 - President Lists Items Requiring Immediate Action"

President Carter's address to the National Conference on Physical Fitness and Sports for All included a series of directives on which he urged immediate action, including:

- Urge all employers to provide facilities for employees fitness programs (the President said he would personally ask employers to take such action).
- Encourage all federal departments and agencies to support physical fitness programs (He said he would talk to the Secretary of Defense and others in the government about increasing their efforts).

2. Medical screening - voluntary and mandatory fitness programs.

a. National Park Service regions and areas are authorized to provide health services (medical examinations) at the expense of the government within the constraints of OMB Circular A-72. Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 792 includes among authorized health services "any in-service examinations of employees that the agency head determines to be necessary (in addition to fitness-for-duty examinations which are performed under existing authority)."

b. Departmental Manual 370 DM 339 specifies procedures for "mandatory in-service examinations of employees in hazardous or arduous occupations. By memorandum the Department's Medical Director has delegated authority to Bureau heads to identify those occupations. Formal procedures for medical examinations and fitness testing for employees engaged in wildland fire suppression are contained in NPS 18.

3. Fitness testing.

a. Federal Personnel Manual Chapter 271, Subchapter 5 reserves to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) the authority for approving physical standards for positions within the competitive service. Agencies have the authority to establish physical standards for positions outside the competitive service. In both cases, bureaus must submit recommendations to the Department's Director of Personnel either for referral to OPM for approval of standards in the competitive service or for his approval of standards in the excepted service. The restriction on the development of additional physical standards by bureaus emanates from Section 7153 of title 5, U.S.C. which requires that applicants or employees need possess only the minimum physical abilities necessary to perform effectively and safely in the job for which they are being considered or to which they will be assigned. Federal Personnel Manual Supplement 339-31, Subchapter SI-1 reiterates this basic requirement and adds that "should an additional or more stringent requirement be determined necessary, the agency, on the basis of careful job analysis, must submit the proposed requirement to OPM for approval before it is used."

b. Physical fitness testing constitutes an additional physical standard which entails requisite approval. With the exception of mandatory testing for wildland fire fighters, NPS has not received approval from OPM to test employees in other occupations (search and rescue, law enforcement, etc.). The possibility exists that OPM will delegate this authority to agencies.

c. Employees participating in either a mandatory program (Western Region) or voluntary program are generally covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act for injuries sustained.

d. Within normal guidelines regarding the use of leave time (FPM Chapter 630), employees may be granted up to three hours of administrative leave per week to participate in structured fitness activities.