

FIRST, *save you.*

**YOUR GUIDE TO THE
NFPA 1582 ANNUAL PHYSICAL**



“We inspect and maintain our tools and apparatus on a daily basis. When we discover issues with this equipment, we work to correct these issues so that the equipment can remain in service. There’s no excuse not to do the same for our first responders on an annual basis. This philosophy should be the gold standard for our System members as well.”



Jim Cook, Chair
*Fire Operations Committee Deputy Chief
Leesburg Volunteer Fire Company
Leesburg, Virginia*

Dear Firefighters and EMS Members,



We’re proud to announce the full-scale implementation of NFA 1582 annual physicals for frontline firefighters and EMS personnel, nationwide. There are good reasons for this.

Serious near-miss medical events and underlying health conditions continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of America’s valued volunteers and employed emergency personnel. The NFA 1582 program will help maintain a healthy workforce by helping to save the lives of our most important resource—you! We want all firefighters and EMS workers to have the most effective health screening available so that they are physically, mentally and emotionally able to continue serving our communities.

The purpose of the NFA 1582 physical is to reduce the likelihood of suffering a preventable line-of-duty death—something that none of us can afford. It is available at no cost to you and provides a baseline health assessment to determine whether or not you are likely to incur a debilitating injury or medical event in the course of performing your duties as a first responder. NFA physicals have identified potentially fatal underlying conditions, allowing personnel the opportunity to either seek treatment while continuing to work or return to doing what they love to do after treatment.

Quite simply, this physical could save your life and give you the confidence to continue saving others. We look forward to your support of this extremely valuable program.

Sincerely,

FAQs

Mandatory NFPA 1582 PHYSICALS

Why is this program being established now?

Why are you doing this now? Is it to discourage volunteerism or new hires, or oust current employees?

We always say that our first responders are our most important resource. We place your health and wellness above all else, and the NFPA annual physical initiative is a concrete example of that. The physical isn't meant to discourage or oust anyone. It's meant to ensure that firefighters and EMS personnel who want to serve are able to do so for as long they want to, within the parameters of safety.

Many fire companies and emergency services have had great success with their NFPA physical program. They have not seen a decrease in job applicants or volunteerism as a result of implementing this essential wellness initiative.

Whom does this include and what type of physical is required?

Whom does this affect?

All operational members who ride an ambulance or fire apparatus are required to participate in this program. NFPA 1582 physicals are not mandatory for chaplains, rehab support personnel or auxiliary members; however, members of these groups are encouraged to participate for free. Administrative personnel are exempt from this program.

Is this the same physical that career personnel get?

Yes, all physicals will be based on the NFPA 1582 physical, Chapter 7 (incumbent).

Is this the same physical I had to take when I joined and that new members have to take?

Yes and no. The actual testing during the physical is the same, but the standard for candidates—or new members—is different than the standard for incumbent members. All incumbent volunteers (anybody who was already a member prior to January 2018) will be held to the incumbent standard, whether they've had their physical before or not.

I am an EMS provider. Why am I being held to a firefighter standard?

Using the NFPA 1582 standard ensures that your health care provider obtains a complete picture of your health, using all available tests. There is no "physical" standard for EMS providers; however, a core set of functions specific to an EMS provider have been adopted to be used as the basis for evaluating the results of the physical. The physical is identical, because we want the providers to have as complete a picture of your health as possible, in order to determine your ability to perform the essential functions of the service that you provide.

Scheduling

When do I get my physical?

Firefighters and EMS members should schedule their physicals to occur within their birth month, on a day that works best for them.

How do I schedule my physical?

You will receive an email, card or letter to schedule your physical about two months before your birthday. A website link will also be provided, so you can view available appointments during your birth month and choose the one that best suits you.

I am going to be away at school/on personal leave/on medical leave during my birth month. Can I get my physical during another month instead?

Yes, you can. Just notify your chain of command for help with rescheduling. Be aware that depending upon the length and cause of your absence, you may not be permitted to serve operationally until you've completed your physical.

Components of the physical

What makes up the physical?

Most of the physical consists of a battery of tests, including vital signs, bloodwork, urinalysis, spirometry, hearing and vision tests, ECG/stress test, etc. The rest is an examination by a health care provider who has been designated by your fire organization.

Is it a one- or two-part physical, and what's the difference?

To better suit your busy schedule, there will only be a one-part physical, where the testing and health care provider examination all occur during a single visit. Participants will receive their detailed results in the mail.

How long will the physical take?

As a general rule, you will need to block out three hours to complete the physical, which includes all the objective testing as well as the physical examination and interview with the health care provider.

Do I have to take a stress test?

Yes. A stress test is a part of the physical for everyone, though not necessarily every year. The stress test is a basic metric for cardiovascular health that is relevant to the duties of both firefighters and EMS-only members.

I have bad knees/hips/feet. Can I take an alternative stress test?

Unfortunately, no. Everyone must take the same stress test unless directed by the health care provider. Both firefighters and EMS-only members are required to be able to lift and carry heavy equipment/patients, climb stairs and perform CPR. If you have a condition or injury that prohibits you from using a treadmill, consider injury/medical leave until you can resolve it.



What to wear or bring

What should I wear to my physical?

Members should wear comfortable workout clothes and shoes. Females should consider wearing a sports bra.

What should I bring to my physical?

Be sure to fill out and bring the paperwork that you'll receive via email once you've scheduled your physical. If you have a preexisting medical condition that's been a problem in the past, or for which you already see a specialist, please bring some information with you (e.g., most recent test results, note you received clearing you for duty previously, etc.) to assist the health care provider in assessing the condition. Fasting is required for blood testing, and snacks are provided afterward, but if you want something specific/more substantial, feel free to bring that as well.

Compliance

I didn't have to take a physical when I joined, so am I exempt from taking this one?

No. Every operational member will be required to complete a physical. No one will be grandfathered out of this program.

What if I refuse to get a physical?

If there's some difficulty with scheduling, your chain of command will work with you to find a time for you to complete your physical. Outright refusal will result in being removed from operational eligibility, and you will not be able to staff apparatus or run calls.

What if I have already taken an NFPA 1582 physical from another jurisdiction? Can I use that?

To ensure that everyone is held to the same standard, even members who have an annual NFPA 1582 physical from another jurisdiction need to see our designated health care provider. However, those members who have test results (blood panels, X-rays, stress test results, etc.) from their other physical within 30 days of their physical may bring them in and avoid repeating some of the tests, at the doctor's discretion.

My doctor

Can I go to my own doctor for my NFPA 1582 physical?

No. Your organization has contracted with a local health care provider who specializes in administering NFPA 1582 physicals. This physician is up to date on the specific health risks and requirements of fire/rescue personnel in ways that primary care physicians are not. Additionally, having one doctor and one office ensures that all our members are being held to the same standard.

Privacy

Will my medical information be discussed with management, my employer or my company leadership?

Absolutely not. Confidential medical information is never shared with anyone, unless you specifically give permission to do so. The only result that your chain of command will receive is your operational status. The results are reported as Cleared, Interim (with any restrictions listed) or Not Cleared. If you are a volunteer, your status is not pertinent to your employment outside of your fire company or EMS service.

Pass/fail

What if I fail my physical?

The most common result of completing a physical is that the member passes the physical, based on the experience in other similarly sized combination fire-rescue departments. Outright failure of the NFPA 1582 physical is rare and typically involves a life-threatening medical condition or a condition that could quickly become life-threatening in the course of providing emergency services.

Members who fail their physical will still be able to volunteer as admin-only members. Another result is being placed on an "interim status," where the member's status is in between a pass and fail, pending some kind of follow-up (usually a visit to a specialist or documentation of continuing care by a primary care physician). Depending on the medical condition, the doctor will designate a member as fully operational, EMS-only operational, admin-only or non-volunteering (this would mostly be in cases of a severe health risk).

Members on interim status will have a set time limit to follow up on an identified concern. During this interim period, it is the member's responsibility to communicate with the designated health care provider and supply the necessary information. If members fail to follow up during this period, they will need to request an extension. For members that fail to follow up or request an extension, the health care provider may have to restart the physical process due to expired data, and that may result in the member being removed from operational status until the identified health issue is resolved. Most identified health conditions are completely treatable and can result in the member being allowed to remain fully operational.

Preexisting conditions

What preexisting conditions will disqualify me from operations?

The short answer is that we don't have a list. While there are conditions that might disqualify a member from firefighting operations, there is, at the discretion of the OHP, generally some latitude. It's not as simple as a pass/fail checklist. The doctor evaluates how different conditions are being managed instead of operating from a checklist. Our intention is to provide every member the best opportunity to pass. If you do have a preexisting medical condition that's been a problem in the past, or for which you already see a specialist, please bring some information (e.g., most recent test results, note you received clearing you for duty previously, etc.) to your physical to help avoid an interim or an extra visit.

Insurance

Do I need to pay for my physical. Should I bring my insurance card?

No, the cost of the physical is covered by your fire company or organization.

Do you have more questions?

You can send any question to your fire chief or station safety officer. If they feel they cannot answer it fully, they will forward your question to the First Responder Center for Excellence for a prompt, confidential response.

Tips ON YOUR UPCOMING NFPA 1582 PHYSICAL



As part of your upcoming NFPA 1582 physical, you will be required to complete a variety of components for a physical exam and undergo a health assessment with a health care provider who is highly experienced in occupational health.

You can assist your health care provider by knowing a list of your medications and gathering updated information on the following conditions. Please be aware that the provider may still request additional information about your medical condition(s).

During the course of your physical, other health issues (not listed here) may arise and the health care provider may request additional information regarding those conditions.

Important Points for You to Know

- 1 DIABETES:** A copy of your most recent hemoglobin A1c (blood test), recent ophthalmology/eye checkup and any recent cardiovascular tests.
- 2 SLEEP DISORDERS/SLEEP APNEA:** A copy of your CPAP compliance log for the last one to three months or documentation from your sleep specialist stating that you are compliant.
- 3 HISTORY OF CARDIOVASCULAR EVENT/ABNORMAL ECG/ABNORMAL EXERCISE STRESS TEST:** Please bring a copy of your most recent cardiologist or primary care provider report showing recent diagnostic tests and determining whether your condition is stable.
- 4 HISTORY OF ASTHMA OR LUNG DISORDER:** Bring a copy of your most recent physician report documenting whether your condition is stable, and bring your medications (because you will be taking a lung function test known as “spirometry”). If your breathing condition is not controlled or you have an upper-respiratory infection, seek treatment first.

- 5 VISION DISORDERS:** If you need correction, please bring your most updated pair of glasses or contacts so that we can obtain the best corrected vision. You will be required to test your vision with and without correction, so if you wear contact lenses, please bring your solution and lens case to the appointment. If your uncorrected vision is worse than 20/100 in either eye, please obtain contacts. Each eye has to correct to 20/40 or better, according to NFPA 1582.

- 6 BRING A LIST** of medications/vaccinations for record review.

- 7 IF YOU TESTED POSITIVE FOR TUBERCULOSIS (TB)** or other infections in the past, please bring a note from your doctor and a copy of your latest chest X-ray.

- 8 IF YOU HAVE ANY RECENT MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES,** please bring your most recent physician note clearing you to participate in sports or operational duties. During your exam, you will likely be assessed for range of motion, strength and flexibility. So if you are actively injured, please let your health care provider know.

- 9 IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, ACUTE STRESS OR POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER,** or if you are self-medicating with drugs or alcohol, please see a health professional.

Please bring a note from your health professional discussing any previous hospitalizations or updates about your mental health condition. If you are taking any medications, you will need a note describing any side effects.

- 10 PLEASE BRING COMFORTABLE SHOES** and be familiar with running on a treadmill. You will walk/run for a few minutes at a time and often on an incline. If you have any reservations about running on a treadmill, please talk to your health professional.

- 11 YOU WILL BE TAKING AN AUDIOMETRY TEST.** If you have any hearing loss or think you have difficulty hearing, please see your health professional or audiologist.

- 12 IF YOU ARE UNDER 18 YEARS OLD,** please ask your parent or guardian to accompany you to the physical. The health care provider may want a parent or guardian available at the time of the physical.



How to PREPARE FOR THE EXERCISE STRESS TEST

- » Consult your health care provider before starting to prepare for the stress test.
- » Train on a treadmill that can go up to 16% incline and 4.2 mph speed.
- » Make sure you have hand grips and a Fitbit or wireless chest strap to check your heart rate. **Maximum target heart rate is 220 minus your age.**
- » Use the chart below to guide your training.

READY, SET, GO!

STEP 1: Start with warmup: 3 mph at 0% incline for 3 minutes.

STEP 2: Increase incline to 2% for another 1 minute.

STEP 3: Increase speed by 0.5 mph and incline by 2% every 1 minute. You're almost there!

STEP 4: Continue increasing efforts until your heart rate equals or goes over your target heart rate.

STEP 5: Once you meet or exceed your target heart rate, run for another 15 seconds.

STEP 6: Cool down for 3 minutes at 3 mph speed and 0% incline.



EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

If during this exercise you experience any type of chest pain, other physical symptoms or breathing problems, change to cool-down mode immediately and stop the test. Consult your health care provider immediately. Also, if you do not go over your target heart rate within 18 minutes, stop the exercise.

What to EXPECT DURING YOUR STRESS TEST

Once you've completed your stress test, your test data will be sent to a cardiologist for further review, and you'll receive your results in your report—your own individual electronic health record.

STAGE 1

 Total time:
3 minutes



Speed:
1.7 mph



Incline:
(10%) 5 METs

STAGE 2

 Total time:
6 minutes



Speed:
2.5 mph



Incline:
(12%) 7 METs

STAGE 3

 Total time:
9 minutes



Speed:
3.4 mph



Incline:
(14%) 10 METs

STAGE 4

 Total time:
12 minutes



Speed:
4.2 mph



Incline:
(16%) 13 METs

PREPARE. PREVENT. PROTECT.™

**For additional resources and information,
please visit firstrespondercenter.org.**



Special thanks
to Loudoun County Virginia's Combined
Fire and Rescue System for providing and
permitting the use of this booklet's content.

*Funding provided by the Department of Homeland
Security's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program*

First Responder Center for Excellence

2130 Priest Bridge Drive, Suite 11, Crofton, MD 21114

Phone: 443-302-2915 | Fax: 410-721-6213