DIRECTOR’S ORDER #57: OCCUPATIONAL MEDICAL STANDARDS, HEALTH AND FITNESS

Approved: /s/ Robert Stanton (signed original on file)
Director, National Park Service

Effective Date: March 1, 1999

Sunset Date: March 1, 2003

This Director’s Order, in conjunction with Reference Manual-57--Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness (RM-57), is a complete revision of the NPS "Health and Fitness Guideline, NPS-57." Release No. 1 of NPS-57 is hereby superseded; existing copies should be discarded.

A. Background and Purpose

In 1993, the National Park Service officially determined its designated law enforcement and fire fighter positions would be managed under the provisions of enhanced annuity retirement (as authorized by 18 U.S.C. 8336(c)). The purpose of enhanced annuity retirement is to enable agencies to field a work force capable of performing the rigorous duties of law enforcement and fire fighting.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3307, the mandatory separation age of 55 is applicable to designated fire fighter positions and the mandatory separation age of 57 is applicable to designated law enforcement positions. The mandatory separation age applies to employees in commissioned positions regardless of appointment or series and includes temporary, term, and seasonal appointments.

Corresponding maximum entry ages were established at age 35 for fire fighters and at age 37 for law enforcement officers to ensure employees may meet minimum qualifications for enhanced retirement. The maximum entry age applies to career and career conditional (permanent) appointments. As temporary appointments are not covered by enhanced annuity retirement, the maximum entry age does not apply to temporary, term, or seasonal appointments. However, as the mandatory separation age is applicable to all appointments, no applicant may receive a temporary, term, or seasonal appointment at or after age 57 for law enforcement positions and at or after age 55 for designated fire fighter positions.

In 1996, the Service completed a field study of the actual work of park rangers performing primarily law enforcement duties to enable the Department of the Interior to establish a medical standard for those positions. The study evaluated the work of park rangers performing law enforcement under actual conditions and circumstances and developed proposed medical standards. The Department of the Interior, on July 2, 1998, approved (under authority contained in 5 CFR 339.202) the resulting Medical Standard for Commissioned Park Rangers.
The purpose of this Director’s Order (as supplemented by RM-57) is to establish implementing procedures for the Medical Standards and revise policy for a physical fitness program for designated positions performing rigorous duties.

In addition to meeting requirements of law and regulation, the Medical Standards will substantially improve the safety and professionalism of employees performing law enforcement, fire fighting and other rigorous duties. The Standards are designed to ensure that employees performing law enforcement are physically able to perform that duty and that their performance does not constitute a threat to the health and well being of themselves, their fellow employees, and park visitors.

The Service will achieve its public trust responsibility to provide effective, efficient law enforcement and fire fighting services by fielding a well-trained, physically conditioned, fully capable work force. Beyond law enforcement and fire fighting services, a healthy and physically fit work force is the key to avoiding lost work time due to injury and illness.

Healthy, fit employees are far more productive and less costly than employees requiring extended medical leave and rehabilitation. For these reasons, a secondary purpose of this Director’s Order is to extend and reconstitute the Service’s voluntary (optional) health and fitness program for all employees, regardless of their job duties.

B. Authority

The general authority to issue this Director’s Order is contained in the National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1 through 4), and Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual. The specific authorities and requirements applicable to employees performing physically rigorous duties covered by this Director’s Order are found in:

Law

5 U.S.C. 3301. Civil service; generally
5 U.S.C. 3307. Competitive service; maximum-age entrance requirements; exceptions

Regulation

5 CFR Part 300-Employment (General)
5 CFR Part 339- Medical Qualification Determinations
29 CFR Part 1910- Occupational Health and Safety

OPM Requirements

OPM Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions; Section IV, Qualification Standards, and Section VI, Medical Requirements

Departmental Policy

DM-446 Law Enforcement
C. Operational Policies and Procedures

C.1 The Service will adopt appropriate medical standards and provide opportunities for designated employees to develop and maintain their physical fitness. The general goal is to establish, encourage, promote, and maintain an efficient and productive work force. The more specific goal is to ensure that all employees assigned law enforcement, fire fighting, and other physically rigorous duties are able safely to perform those duties.

C.2 The Associate Director, Administration, and the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, are jointly assigned functional authority for the Service's Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness Program. They will promulgate and periodically revise reference manuals, training courses and materials, certifications, and other necessary materials and documents to implement and operate this program consistent with the policies, procedures and authorities contained in this Director's Order.

C.3 The Associate Director, Administration, and the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, will distribute and otherwise reproduce within Reference Manual-57 medical standards approved by the Department of the Interior for park ranger (protection) positions, and by the Office of Personnel Management for firefighter and other positions. Medical standards for other positions may be found in the OPM Operating Manual "Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions" and/or Reference Manual-18, Wildland Fire Management. All standards must be applied uniformly by all managers throughout the Service.

C.4 Servicewide consistency in the implementation and operation of this program is vital and required. Coordination and integration of the Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness Program within existing functional and organizational structures must take place and be coordinated primarily at the Washington Office level by senior officials assigned by the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education and the Associate Director, Administration.

C.5 In order to ensure Servicewide consistency, final Service decisions regarding the medical and physical fitness of individuals to perform physically rigorous operational functions and associated training activities will be made by the Associate Director, Administration. An appeal of a Medical Standards disqualification determination must be made by an employee within 30 calendar days of receipt of notification of disqualification. The decision of the MSB will constitute the final agency decision. Pursuant to 270 DM 771.3.5B, appeals of Medical Standards disqualification determinations are processed through the procedures of the MSB and are not subject to review by the administrative grievance procedure. In cases appealed to the Medical Standards Board, the Board Chairperson will issue final Service decisions.

C.6 An applicant who does not meet the OPM or Departmental medical standards established for such work may not be appointed to a position designated for enhanced law enforcement or firefighter retirement. This applies to career, career-conditional, term, and temporary appointments.

C.7 An employee who does not meet the medical standards established for such work may not perform law enforcement or fire fighting work, regardless of whether the duties are primary to the position or collateral, unless the Medical Standards Board approves a request for reasonable accommodation.

C.8 An employee may not be admitted to law enforcement or fire fighting training that requires the regular or frequent performance of rigorous duties unless s/he meets the medical standards
established for persons performing such duties. Any employee may be admitted to training that requires only occasional or incidental performance of rigorous duties.

C.9 The Medical Review Officer (who may be an employee or contractor) will make initial (pre-hire) medical qualification recommendations which will then be subject to approval by the Associate Director, Administration (or designee).

C.10 The Medical Review Officer will make post-hire (career or temporary employees) medical qualification recommendations on a regularly scheduled basis as defined in Reference Manuals 18 and 57. The Associate Director, Administration (or designee) will issue medical qualification decisions.

C.11 Reasonable accommodation may be considered in each instance of medical disqualification of an employee if the disqualification is the result of disability. In the event park management is or should be aware of an obvious or apparent disability, the employee’s supervisor or manager should seek assistance through equal opportunity professionals and request accommodation on behalf of the employee. In the event the disability is not obvious or apparent, the employee may request such accommodation to the park superintendent or appropriate manager. The superintendent will forward the request and his/her recommendation through the Regional Director to the (WASO) Human Resources Program Manager. All requests for reasonable accommodation for disability as a result of medical disqualification must be reviewed and approved by the Medical Standards Board prior to implementation.

C.12 The Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, and Associate Director, Administration will appoint the Medical Standards Board (MSB). The MSB will consist of: 1) the Chief, Ranger Activities Division (or designee); 2) the Chief Law Enforcement Officer or the Program Manager for Wildland Fire Operations, or other appropriate risk program manager; 3) a senior Service safety manager; 4) the Medical Review Officer; and 5) the Human Resources Program Manager (or designee). The Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) will serve as the MSB Chairperson.

C.13 The MSB Chairperson will be the deciding official in reasonable accommodation determinations and will be the spokesperson for the MSB before any third party.

C.14 The Service will use the Physical Efficiency Battery (PEB) of measurements developed at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), as the mandatory physical fitness test for initial appointment to a position whose duties are primarily law enforcement. The Service will use the applicable Work Capacity Test Series as physical fitness test for appointment to designated fire fighting positions.

C.15 The PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series will be threshold tests and baseline fitness measures. The Service will generally not place persons failing to pass the PEB or the Work Capacity Test Series in law enforcement or firefighter training that requires the regular performance of rigorous duties.

C.16 For current employees performing law enforcement and/or fire fighting duties, the PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series will serve to identify individuals who are potentially at high risk of injury or disease by continuing to perform the rigorous duties of their position. By administering the PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series, the Service will identify employees whose physical condition may pose a potential health or safety risk to themselves, to co-workers, or to the public. The Service may require these employees to reduce or eliminate that potential risk through mandatory participation in a health and fitness program focused on positive improvement and achieving fitness results.
C.17 All parks and units employing Park Rangers or other employees assigned law enforcement or fire fighting duties may provide each such employee up to 3 hours of mandatory-participation physical fitness exercise time per work-week. Pursuant to DO-18, those wildland firefighters whose fulltime duties are 100 percent arduous duty-related (such as helitack, hotshot, engine, prescribed fire, smokejumper crews) will normally be provided 1 hour per day for fitness training. Parks and units may provide or make available appropriate and safe facilities and equipment to enable each mandatory-participation employee to maintain adequate physical conditioning to perform safely the rigorous duties assigned. Park managers may develop on-site fitness facilities and/or provide for employee participation in fitness facilities within a reasonable distance to the park or office.

C.18 The Service will continue to invest in the health and physical well being of all its employees, regardless of job series or duties, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 7901 and 16 U.S.C. 1a-2(b). Service managers are encouraged to support voluntary fitness programs to promote the physical and mental fitness of employees under their supervision. Managers may utilize flexible and alternative work schedules, grant annual leave or leave without pay, disseminate information concerning community-based programs, offer in-house fitness and health education programs, and use other appropriate means to support employee health and fitness goals.

---------- End of Director’s Order ----------

1"Rigorous position" means a position, the duties of which are so rigorous that employment opportunities should, as soon as reasonably possible, be limited (through establishment of a maximum entry age and physical qualifications) to young and physically vigorous individuals...." (5 C.F.R. 842.802)
I. Purpose

In order to achieve its mission to conserve park resources while providing for the enjoyment thereof by current and future generations, the National Park Service (NPS) requires a capable and diverse work force. The purpose of the Service’s Occupational Medicine, Health and Fitness program is to establish and maintain a healthy, physically fit work force through a managed program of appropriate medical surveillance and regular physical exercise. The Health and Fitness Program is designed to reduce the risk of illness, disease and injury, to lower health care costs, and to improve employee morale and productivity.

For those employees holding rigorous physical duty positions having a high potential for exposure to occupational health hazards or on-the-job injuries, specific medical standards and/or fitness measures are applied to eliminate or minimize these potential health risks. The Department of the Interior has approved standards for commissioned park rangers, GS-025, and those park ranger positions that have been designated for enhanced law enforcement coverage.

In order to assist all employees in achieving healthier lifestyles, which will in turn enhance individual and organizational effectiveness, a comprehensive Occupational Medicine, Health and Fitness Program, is hereby established. This reference manual provides two distinct yet related programs: an Occupational Medicine Program, and an Occupational Health and Fitness Program.

This reference manual is issued under authority of Director’s Order 57, which requires the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, and Associate Director, Administration to promulgate reference manuals for the Occupational Medicine, Health and Fitness Program. Director’s Order #57 is incorporated into the Reference Manual as section 2, below.

II. Director’s Order 57: Occupational Medicine, Health and Fitness

This Director’s Order, in conjunction with Reference Manual 57, Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness, (RM-57), is a complete revision of the National Park Service (NPS) "Health and Fitness Guideline, NPS-57." Release No. 1 of NPS-57 is hereby superseded; existing copies should be discarded.

A. Background and Purpose
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Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3307, the mandatory separation age of 55 is applicable to designated firefighter positions and the mandatory separation age of 57 is applicable to designated law enforcement positions. The mandatory separation age applies to employees in commissioned positions regardless of appointment or series and includes temporary, term, and seasonal appointments.

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In 1996 the Service completed a field study of the actual work of park rangers performing primarily law enforcement duties to enable the Department of the Interior to establish a medical standard for those positions. The study evaluated the work of park rangers performing law enforcement under actual conditions and circumstances and developed proposed medical standards. The Department of the Interior, on July 2, 1998, approved (under authority contained in 5 CFR 339.202) the resulting medical standard for commissioned park rangers.

The purpose of this Director’s Order (as supplemented by the Reference Manual 57) is to establish implementing procedures for the medical standards and revise policy for a physical fitness program for designated positions performing rigorous duties.

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does not constitute a threat to the health and well being of themselves, their fellow employees, and park visitors.

The Service will achieve its public trust responsibility to provide effective, efficient law enforcement and firefighting services by fielding a well-trained, physically conditioned, fully capable work force. Beyond law enforcement and firefighting services, a healthy and physically fit work force is the key to avoiding lost work time due to injury and illness.

Healthy, fit employees are far more productive and less costly than employees requiring extended medical leave and rehabilitation. For these reasons, a secondary purpose of this Director’s Order is to extend and reconstitute the Service’s voluntary (optional) health and fitness program for all employees, regardless of their job duties.

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5 CFR Part 300-Employment (General)
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Office of Personnel Management Requirements (OPM)

OPM operating manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions; Section IV, Qualification Standards, and Section VI, Medical Requirements

Departmental Policy

DM-446 Law Enforcement

C. Operational Policies and Procedures
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C.2 The Associate Director, Administration, and the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, are jointly assigned functional authority for the Service’s Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness Program. They will promulgate and periodically revise reference manuals, training courses and materials, certifications, and other necessary materials and documents to implement and operate this program consistent with the policies, procedures and authorities contained in this Director’s Order.

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C.4 Servicewide consistency in the implementation and operation of this program is vital and required. Coordination and integration of the Occupational Medical Standards, Health and Fitness Program within existing functional and organizational structures must take place and be coordinated primarily at the Washington Office level by senior officials assigned by the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education and the Associate Director, Administration.

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C.7 An employee who does not meet the medical standards established for such work may not
perform law enforcement or fire fighting work, regardless of whether the duties are primary to the position or collateral, unless the Medical Standards Board approves a request for reasonable accommodation.

C.8 An employee may not be admitted to law enforcement or firefighting training that requires the regular or frequent performance of rigorous duties unless s/he meets the medical standards established for persons performing such duties. Any employee may be admitted to training that requires only occasional or incidental performance of rigorous duties.

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C.12 The Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, and Associate Director, Administration will appoint the MSB. The MSB will consist of: 1) the Chief, Ranger Activities Division (or designee); 2) the Chief Law Enforcement Officer or the Program Manager for Wildland Fire Operations, or other appropriate risk program manager; 3) a senior Service safety manager; 4) the MRO; and 5) the Human Resources Program Manager (or designee). The Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) will serve as the MSB chairperson.

C.13 The MSB chairperson will be the deciding official in reasonable accommodation determinations and will be the spokesperson for the MSB before any third party.

C.14 The Service will use the Physical Efficiency Battery (PEB) of measurements developed at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), as the mandatory physical fitness test for initial appointment to a position whose duties are primarily law enforcement. The Service
will use the applicable Work Capacity Test Series as physical fitness test for appointment to designated firefighting positions.

C.15 The PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series will be threshold tests and baseline fitness measures. The Service will generally not place persons failing to pass the PEB or the Work Capacity Test Series in law enforcement or firefighter training that requires the regular performance of rigorous duties.

C.16 For current employees performing law enforcement and/or firefighting duties, the PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series will serve to identify individuals who are potentially at high risk of injury or disease by continuing to perform the rigorous duties of their position. By administering the PEB and the Work Capacity Test Series, the Service will identify employees whose physical condition may pose a potential health or safety risk to themselves, to coworkers, or to the public. The Service may require these employees to reduce or eliminate that potential risk through mandatory participation in a health and fitness program focused on positive improvement and achieving fitness results.

C.17 All parks and units employing park rangers or other employees assigned law enforcement or firefighting duties may provide each such employee 3 hours of mandatory-participation physical fitness exercise time per workweek. Pursuant to Director’s Order 18, those wildland firefighters whose full-time duties are 100 percent arduous duty-related (such as helitack, hotshot, engine, prescribed fire, smokejumper crews) will normally be provided 1 hour per day for fitness training. Parks and units may provide or make available appropriate and safe facilities and equipment to enable each mandatory-participation employee to maintain adequate physical conditioning to perform safely the rigorous duties assigned. Park managers may develop on-site fitness facilities and/or provide for employee participation in fitness facilities within a reasonable distance to the park or office.

C.18 The Service will continue to invest in the health and physical well being of all its employees, regardless of job series or duties, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 7901 and 16 U.S.C. 1a-2(b). Service managers are encouraged to support voluntary fitness programs to promote the physical and mental fitness of employees under their supervision. Managers may utilize flexible and alternative work schedules, grant annual leave or leave without pay, disseminate information concerning community-based programs, offer in-house fitness and health education programs, and use other appropriate means to support employee health and fitness goals.

End Director’s Order

III. Standards and Measures

This reference manual addresses medical and fitness topic for those positions covered under both mandatory participation fitness programs as well as voluntary participation programs. Both programs address employee health concerns and provide individual employees with
recommendations specific to their needs.

The objective of the medical standards and physical fitness program is to achieve and maintain each employee’s ability to perform their duties safely and effectively.

**Definitions:**

**Accommodation**

Accommodation means reasonable accommodation as described in 29 CFR 1613.704.

**Arduous or hazardous positions**

Positions that are dangerous or physically demanding to such a degree that an incumbent’s medical condition is necessarily an important consideration in determining ability to perform safely and efficiently.

**Medical condition**

Health impairment which results from injury or disease, including psychiatric disease.

**Medical documentation**

A statement from a licensed physician or other appropriate practitioner which provides information the agency considers necessary to enable it to make an employment decision. To be acceptable, the diagnosis or clinical impression must be justified according to established diagnostic criteria and the conclusions and recommendations must not be inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards. The determination that the diagnosis meets these criteria is made by or in coordination with generally accepted professional standards. The determination that the diagnosis meets these criteria is made by or in coordination with a physician or, if appropriate, a practitioner of the same discipline as the one who issued the statement.

**Occupational Medicine Program**

An overall system of applicant and employee medical examinations and career-long medical surveillance. The occupational medicine program can be used in all work-related circumstances, stressing accurate and consistent application of medical findings for all individuals in similar positions with similar duties. The occupational medicine program has two components; one for positions having specific medical qualification standards for physically rigorous duties and one for positions having general medical standards.
Medical Surveillance Program

A system of recurring medical examinations or tests established by written agency policy or directive to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health or safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demands.

Medical standard

A written description of the medical requirements for a particular occupation based on a determination that a certain level of fitness of health status is required for successful performance. Medical standards are conditions of employment and must be met prior to employment or prior to consideration in a position when these standards apply.

Physical requirement

A written description of job-related physical abilities which are normally considered essential for successful performance in a specific position.

Occupational Fitness Program

The Service’s overall workforce physical fitness program. The occupational fitness program provides appropriate exercise equipment and exercise facilities, individual fitness evaluations and counseling, and individualized physical fitness development and maintenance programs for all employees. The occupational fitness program has two components; a mandatory program for employees in positions having mandatory physical requirements essential for successful job performance, and a voluntary program providing all employees with an opportunity to maintain general fitness.

All incumbents of rigorous-duty positions have essential medical and physical fitness requirements and are enrolled in the mandatory fitness program, while all other employees are encouraged to participate in the voluntary fitness program.

Rigorous Position

A position the duties of which are so rigorous that employment opportunities should, as soon as reasonably possible, be limited (through establishment of a maximum entry age and physical qualifications) to physically vigorous individuals.

Authority:

The following excerpts of selected text from applicable laws, regulations, and policies are provided for the reader’s convenience:

Law
5 U.S.C. 3301. Civil Service; generally

The President may:

   (1) Ascertain the fitness of applicants as to age, health, character, knowledge, and ability for the employment sought;

5 U.S.C. 3307. Competitive service; maximum-age entrance requirements; exceptions:

   (d) The head of any agency may determine and fix the minimum and maximum limits of age within which an original appointment may be made to a position as a law enforcement officer or firefighter, as defined by section 8331(20) and (21) respectively, of this title.

   (e) The head of an agency may determine and fix the maximum age limit for an original appointment to a position as a firefighter or law enforcement officer, as defined by section 8401(14) or (17), respectively, of this title.

Regulation

5 CFR Part 339- Medical Qualification Determinations

339.101 Coverage

This part applies to all applicants for all employees in competitive and excepted service positions;

339.102 Purpose and Effect

(c) Failure to meet a properly established medical standard or physical requirement under this part means that the individual is not qualified for the position unless a waiver or reasonable accommodation is indicated, as described in §§339.103 and 339.204. An employee’s refusal to be examined in accordance with a proper agency order authorized under this part is grounds for appropriate disciplinary or adverse action.

339.202 Medical standards

OPM may establish or approve medical standards for a Government-wide occupation (i.e., an occupation common to more than one agency). An agency may establish medical standards for positions that predominate in that agency (i.e., where the agency has 50 percent or more of the positions in a particular occupation). Such standards must be justified on the basis that the duties of the position are arduous or hazardous, or require a certain level of health status or fitness because the nature of the positions involve a high degree of responsibility toward the public or national security concerns. The rationale for establishing the standard must be documented.
Standards established by OPM or an agency must be:

- Established by written directive and uniformly applied,
- Directly related to the actual requirements of the position, and
- Consistent with OPM instructions published in FPM chapter 339.

339.203 Physical requirements.

Agencies are authorized to establish physical requirements for individual positions without OPM approval when such requirements are considered essential for successful job performance. The requirements must be clearly supported by the actual duties of the position and documented in the position description.

339.205 Medical evaluation programs.

Agencies may establish periodic examination or immunization programs by written policies or directives to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health or safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demands. The need for a medical evaluation program must be clearly supported by the nature of the work. The specific positions covered must be identified and the applicants or incumbents notified in writing of the reasons for including the positions in the program.

842.804 Evidence.

(a) An agency head’s determination under \(802.803(a)\) (finding that a position is a rigorous position) must be based solely on the official position description of the position in question and any other official description of duties and qualifications. The official documentation for the position should, as soon as is reasonably possible, establish that the primary duties of the position are so rigorous that the agency does not allow individuals to enter the position if they are over a certain age or if they fail to meet certain physical qualifications (that is, physical requirements and/or medical standards), as determined by the employing agency head based on the personnel management needs of the agency for the positions in question.

**Occupational Medicine Program**

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Occupational Medicine Program is to provide a safe work environment for employees by ensuring that employees meet medical standards for their position. For employees exposed to known hazards or required to perform rigorous duties, measures are instituted to diminish the potential adverse effects by means of
appropriate medical standards and/or services and to ensure that they are medically fit to perform rigorous duties.

Employees and applicants for positions covered by specific medical standards must continually meet those medical standards.

Applicants for positions covered by validated physical fitness requirements must meet those requirements for appointment to those positions and must thereafter participate in fitness programs. Employees in positions covered by validated physical fitness requirements are encouraged to continue to meet validated physical fitness standards after initial appointment and must participate in fitness programs.

Employees in rigorous duty positions must be physically and medically fit and able at all times to safely perform the arduous, hazardous, and physically demanding duties of their positions. Procedures outlined herein may also be used to evaluate the medical capability of employees in positions that do not have specific medical or fitness standards safely to perform their duties.

**Positions Having Specific Medical Standards**

The OPM requires that agencies establish medical/physical qualifications for individuals entering and retaining positions that primarily perform rigorous (physically arduous) duties. The Service applies these medical/physical qualifications to all positions in which rigorous duties are assigned whether as a primary or collateral duty. This applies whether the employee encumbering a position is in a career, term or temporary appointment. Agencies must establish realistic standards to ensure applicants/incumbents are physically capable of performing the essential duties/tasks of the position safely and efficiently, without causing risk to self or others.

Specific medical standards and a medical surveillance program are intended to allow the Service to determine if applicants or incumbents have any medical condition(s) that would prevent them from performing, with or without reasonable accommodation, the essential functions of the position without posing a significant risk to the safety and health of self or others. The Service must determine if an employee’s existing medical condition or health status will be aggravated and/or worsened by the physical demands and/or working conditions of the employee’s job or work conditions.

**Positions Without Specific Medical Standards**

For employees in positions without specific medical standards, the Service seeks to:

Detect patterns of disease/injury that are work-related:

- Provide employees with information about occupational hazards and present health; and
• Provide preventive medical health assessments and recommendations on a voluntary basis.

For All Positions

For all employees and applicants for employment, the Service seeks to:

• Provide a consistent basis for examining and evaluating the medical qualifications and fitness for duty of an applicant/employee;
• Provide a consistent basis for evaluating requests for reasonable accommodation; and,

The purpose of these objectives is not to provide routine preventive or diagnostic medical services. Preventive medicine services are important and worthwhile, but are complementary to, rather than a substitute for, job-related medical examinations. Routine medical examinations continue to be the responsibility of the individual employee.

Organization of the Occupational Medicine Program

Rigorous Duty Medical Examinations and Qualification Determinations

The medical examination program has two basic components. The first is a comprehensive medical examination; where each applicant or incumbent of a law enforcement (or firefighting) position receives a comprehensive medical examination. Medical examinations are administered by a qualified medical provider acceptable to the SERVICE, following the specific examination protocol provided. The second is a medical qualification determination made by comparing the medical condition of the individual against the medical standards for the position.

For the first component, sufficient medical information must be obtained to enable a professional medical-qualification decision to be rendered. The examining physician checks all items of medical significance necessary to accurately report sufficient medical information to fully describe the individual’s current medical condition, including reviewing the individual’s medical history. Personal physicians, medical specialists, and treating physicians may be consulted by the examining physician and/or the reviewing physician for more in-depth medical information and prognosis if needed. The results and findings of the medical examination are forwarded to the Service’s designated MRO.

The MRO is a physician who has observed and studied the work of law enforcement officers, including National Park Service rangers. The MRO is also the expert regarding state-of-the-art medical research and practice regarding the performance of law enforcement work. Both knowledge of the work and knowledge of medicine are
necessary in order to make sound evaluations of an individual’s ability to perform law enforcement safely and effectively. As a recognized subject-matter expert, the MRO is able to explain, defend, and justify the medical and occupational basis for his/her occupational medicine conclusions.

The second component is the rendering by the MRO of a consistent professional medical determination of the qualification of the applicant or incumbent to perform the duties of the position safely. Information provided to the MRO must include medical history, current medical evaluation, and description of critical job duties, potential health risk exposures, and any information about previous exposures to known health risks. Consultations with personal physicians, treating physicians, specialists, or medical professionals may be necessary. In addition, the MRO must be informed of any potential for future exposure to occupational illness or diseases known to the Service, that could affect the health or safety of the individual or co-workers.

The most important characteristic of the medical review system is that the examining physician concentrates on patient examination, and the MRO concentrates on the relationship between the medical data (provided by the examining physician) and the known characteristics of the job.

The MRO will be able to render a consistent medical recommendation on all applicants and incumbents for park ranger law enforcement and/or firefighting positions.

Specific knowledge of the tasks typically performed and the conditions under which the tasks are performed are a crucial component necessary to render an accurate occupational medicine opinion. As a specialist in law enforcement occupational medicine, the MRO must be a recognized medical expert in regard to Federal law enforcement.

For incumbents, a medical specialist’s "opinion" or a specialized medical test(s) may be requested by the MRO, when the MRO is uncertain about the extent, limitations, or prognosis of an individual's condition. A private physician’s opinion or further medical evaluation(s) may be voluntarily obtained by the incumbent and submitted to the MRO for further consideration.

The Human Resources Program Manager (or designee), in consultation with the Program Manager, Ranger Activities (or designee) issues medical disqualification determinations. Decisions will be based upon the medical determinations of the MRO, including full consideration of any evaluation obtained from the employee's physician, and any relevant information that is submitted for consideration. Medical disqualification may be appealed to the MSB chairperson.

**Employee/Applicant Responsibilities**

The NPS occupational medicine program includes mandatory pre-placement/post conditional offer and baseline medical evaluation, periodic medical evaluations and return to duty or fitness for duty examinations. Participation in the occupational medicine program is mandatory for all
applicants and incumbents assigned rigorous duties. Employees must report known prior exposures, provide complete and accurate medical information to the examining and reviewing physicians, and disclose any prior health issues or treatments, including mental health issues or treatment, so that the MRO can make an informed medical determination.

Sufficient medical information as required by the MRO must be provided in order to render a medically sound qualification determination. In the absence of sufficient medical information to support qualifying an individual for a rigorous duty position, a disqualification must be issued in the interest of public and individual safety. Withholding, falsifying, distorting, or misrepresenting relevant medical (including mental health) information may lead to medical disqualification and/or disciplinary or adverse action. Falsifying an application or withholding medical information may significantly compromise the safety of a law enforcement officer and/or his/her fellow officers. It is the policy of the Service that the penalty for falsification or withholding of medical information in regard to medical examination for a rigorous duty position is removal from Federal service (see Department of the Interior Handbook on Charges and Penalty Selection for Disciplinary and Adverse Actions, Table of Penalties, item 22a. “Falsification, misrepresentation or omission of fact in connection with application for employment or other personal history record with respect to a material fact or point which would have adversely affected selection for appointment”).

Each applicant or current employee shall report to the examining physician and/or MRO any significant exposure (i.e., chemical, infectious, or biological, etc.) and/or any medical condition that may interfere with his or her ability to perform the full range of duties required for the position. The occupational medicine program includes mandatory preplacement/post conditional offer medical evaluation, baseline medical evaluation, periodic medical evaluations, and return to duty or fitness for duty examinations. Participation in the occupational medicine program is mandatory for all applicants and incumbents of rigorous duty (6c) positions. Employees shall voluntarily report known prior exposures, provide complete and accurate medical information to the examining and reviewing physicians, and disclose any prior health issues or treatments, including mental health issues or treatment, so that the MRO can make an informed medical determination.

Medical Examination Program

Preplacement/post Conditional Medical Examinations and Baseline Medical Examinations

During the application process for positions with medical standards, a medical examination must be administered prior to selection. A preplacement/post conditional medical examination is an examination that occurs after the applicant has accepted an offer of employment with the condition that applicant complete the examination and receives a satisfactory medical evaluation. The preplacement/post conditional medical examination is required in order to assure that the applicant is medically qualified for a rigorous-duty position.
Preplacement/preincident medical examinations are required for all applicants and employees prior to entering into a training program, qualifying to perform any emergency situation or hazardous-environment work (i.e., health hazard investigations, aircraft pilot, scuba diving, rigorous rescue duties, etc.) whenever specific, approved medical standards for such work exist.

The MRO will evaluate each medical examination against the specific medical standard. The MRO will assess the potential effect of any existing medical condition(s) on the applicant or employee's ability to safely perform the full range of duties of the position or to work safely in the unusual operational environment.

No one will be certified (qualified) as meeting the medical requirements of a position if the MRO determines that the applicant has a medical condition preventing the applicant from safely performing, with or without reasonable accommodation, the full range of duties of the job.

A baseline medical examination is administered post-hire and is used to establish the condition of an individual’s medical health on a given date. This data can then be compared to subsequent periodic medical evaluation results for the purpose of determining whether the individual has any significant health trends that may be occupationally related.

**Periodic Medical Surveillance Examinations**

In order to assure a continued acceptable level of health and medical fitness and to ensure the performance of the full range of duties, periodic medical evaluations are administered to all employees in occupations/jobs having specific medical standards. All employees in rigorous duty designated positions or assigned rigorous duties must receive periodic medical examinations. Employees under age 40 receive periodic medical examinations every 2 years. Employees age 40 and older will receive periodic medical examinations annually. Examinations should occur within 1 month of the employee’s birthday.

The MRO will:

- Determine if incumbent has developed any medical condition/s that would prevent him/her from performing, with or without reasonable accommodation, the essential functions of an enforcement job without posing a significant risk to the safety and health of him/herself or others;
- Determine if health status will be aggravated and/or accelerated by physical demands and conditions of the job;
- Detect changes in employee’s health status that may be caused by harmful working conditions;
- Detect patterns of disease/injury that are work-related;
- Provide employees with information about occupational hazards and health maintenance
advice;

- Comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, EEOC Guidelines and 5 CFR 339 Medical Qualifications Determinations;
- Provide occupationwide preventive medical health assessments and recommendations on an as-requested basis;
- Enter and regularly analyze medical information in an electronic medical record database and ensure that tightly restricted access to such records is maintained in accordance with law and regulation;

**Return to Duty and Fitness for Duty Examinations**

*Return to Duty Examinations* are given to an employee who has been absent from duty due to a medical condition that the employee’s immediate supervisor (or higher-level managers) feel may threaten the employee’s ability to safely and efficiently perform the full range of duties required.

The medical examination results will be evaluated by the MRO (by reviewing medical reports provided by the employee's treating physician, etc.), before the employee is returned to duty. The MRO will not recommend the employee’s return to the rigorous duty position if any medical condition is present that may potentially affect the individual's ability to perform all the essential functions of the job safely. The MRO, in conjunction with supervisors and management, shall take into account the employee's current duty assignment(s) and alternative duty assignments or other programs designed to allow an individual to gradually return to full duty.

*Fitness for Duty Examinations* may be ordered in two situations; whenever an employee raises a medical condition as an affirmative defense for a time and attendance, conduct, or performance deficiency; and when management has a direct question about an employee’s continued capacity to meet the physical or medical (including mental health) requirements of the position.

**Occupations with Medical Standards for Rigorous Duty Positions**

This section provides guidance on determining if an employee is governed by a mandatory standard(s). Using this information proper selection of the appropriate medical evaluation is possible.

In the NPS, some standards apply to an entire occupational series, while others apply to some sub-grouping of a series, or actual duties performed in a given position. In some cases what is needed is a "clearance for use" such as those required for Self Contained Breather Apparatus (SCBA).

In all these cases, determinations may be provided as a distinct examination and clearance process or as part of an examination and review carried out for other purposes (e.g., a comprehensive medical surveillance program).
Law Enforcement Positions

The job requirements for law enforcement employees of the Service are by their nature rigorous and hazardous. These job requirements are performed under variable and unpredictable working conditions. Due to their job requirements and working conditions, the Service has developed an occupational safety and health program that includes medical standards for the park ranger (protection). The Service applies Governmentwide medical standards for criminal investigator and jailor positions.

Wildland Firefighter Positions

The job requirements for wildland firefighter employees are by their nature rigorous and hazardous. Guidelines developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for medical examinations (NFPA 1582 - Medical Requirements for Firefighters, 1992; and NFPA 295 - Wildfire Control, 1991), and by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group for fitness (Wildland Fire Qualification Subsystem Guide - 310-1, October 1993) have been incorporated in this edition of the reference manual, pending anticipated updates or revisions.

Diver Positions

The job requirements for employees involved in dive operations are by their nature arduous and hazardous.

Pilot/Aviator Positions

Individuals whose functions include piloting aircraft must meet the medical standards and certification requirements of the Federal Aviation Regulations, as presented in 14 CFR 67.

Occupational Medicine Program Roles and Qualifications

Occupational Health and Fitness Program Manager

The Occupational Health and Fitness Programs Manager will serve as the focal point for all aspects of the occupational health and fitness program.

Specifically, the manager will serve as the central authority for all program and policy determinations; the central point of contact for all external agency issues; and as the central clearinghouse for the occupational health and fitness program.

The Occupational Health and Fitness Program Manager, designated by the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, is responsible for:
1. Implementing Reference Manual 57 and the national medical and fitness goals.

2. Providing general occupational medical, health and fitness information to field offices in cooperation with central office Health and Fitness Coordinators (HFC).

3. Approving qualifications and protocols for HFCs.

4. Representing the Service on the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

5. Coordinating occupational medical, health and fitness management activities with the Department of the Interior, FLETC, and various outside agencies, committees, and other organizations.

6. Providing a clearinghouse on training techniques, testing, and equipment.

**Medical Review Officer**

The MRO shall be a currently licensed doctor of medicine (M.D.) or osteopathy (D.O.). At a minimum, the MRO should be board certified or board eligible in the field of occupational medicine. The MRO shall be qualified to provide professional expertise in the areas of occupational safety and health as they relate to the program and policies established under this program.

The MRO will provide or oversee the following advisory and consultative services:

- Up-to-date and complete medical and technical information regarding specific medical and physical conditions or medical examination procedures relevant to existing or proposed physical requirements or health related personnel management programs for employees;

- Review and approval of results and conclusions derived from medical examinations conducted by Government or contract physicians;

- Technical assistance (including advisory opinions in medical and occupational health areas, e.g., worker’s compensation, disability retirement, medical standards, civil lawsuits, MSPB challenges, EEOC cases, etc.) to ensure compliance with agency policy;

- Expert review and analysis of medical documentation and other materials submitted in support of:
  
  (1) medical/physical qualifications of applicants,

  (2) employee restoration rights under 5 U.S.C. 8151 following full or partial recovery from a compensable injury.
requests for job accommodations or other special benefits to health conditions.

- Written reports on medical standards, medical policy issues, or individual medical documentation reviews as requested;

- Guidance in resolving complex medical/personnel management issues;

- Guidance regarding new and experimental procedures (i.e., radial keratotomy, surgical implants, prosthetic devices) as a means of satisfying medical, vision, hearing requirements, etc.;

- Preparation of reports summarizing findings, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations for use in fulfilling complex managerial responsibilities related to the medical evaluation and clearance process;

- Research and analysis of complex legal and medical issues through coordination with the Office of the Solicitor;

- Research and analysis of technical, scientific and medical data in support of policy development and program management;

- Assistance in the development and implementation of a comprehensive and cost-effective Occupational Medical Evaluation and Clearance Program for candidates and incumbents, including such services and topics as:
  
  ➔ Pre-employment medical evaluations  
  ➔ Periodic medical evaluations  
  ➔ Return-to-duty medical evaluations  
  ➔ Preventive medicine counseling

Human Resources Program Manager (s)

The Human Resources Program Manager will notify employees and managers of new or revised Governmentwide, agency and bureau human resources policies and procedures that may impact safety or health. These include drug testing, hazardous work site qualifications, and motor vehicle operator qualifications.

Servicing personnel offices will maintain employee occupational health records including audiograms, physical examination results, exposure records, and physician reports, recommendations, and summaries as they relate to occupational exposures, injuries, illnesses, return to duty, and physical qualifications.
Health Care Providers

The role of the health care provider in this occupational medicine program is that of primary provider of clinical services (including both routine and emergency services), consultant to employees receiving services and to the agency/program MRO, and professional data gatherer regarding health effects of workplace exposures and the health status of employees. Health care providers may include professionals from a variety of professional backgrounds, including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, audiologists, audiometricians, laboratory technologists, and others in the health care arena. All health care providers, including individual or corporate entities, who provide services for employees are expected to do so in a manner consistent with this reference manual, the specified terms of their contracts or agreements with the Service, and local standards for health care services.

Examining Physician Qualification Standards/Credentials

Many of the NPS positions for which employees will receive medical examinations involve some aspect of exposure to chemical substances, or because of the arduous and/or hazardous nature of the work itself. The clinical examination services provided must be performed by or under the supervision of a licensed physician, preferably one knowledgeable in occupational medicine. The examining physicians, whether they serve as individual contractors, or through a larger clinic or multi-agency arrangement, should demonstrate that they possess necessary credentials, including:

- Current medical licensure in the State where services will be provided; and

- Current certification, or eligibility for certification, by the national board for an appropriate medical field, e.g., occupational medicine, preventive medicine, internal medicine, family practice; (certification in occupational medicine is highly preferred, though certification in another specialty, and additional training in occupational medicine, is acceptable);

- Possess current medical practice liability insurance (minimum coverage of $1 million per occurrence and $3 million in aggregate are recommended) or, if a Federal employee, the services they plan to provide for NPS are covered by their current position description and/or personnel orders (the Federal Tort Claims Act provides liability protection for Federal employees while performing official duties, including carrying out medical services);

- Are available to meet the specified examination needs of the covered employees, and are available to respond to urgent consultation or health care needs following exposure incidents;

- Have access directly, or via contract, to certified laboratory services for blood and urine testing (including testing for agents, or the biological effects of agents, such as heavy metals, pesticides, and polychlorinated bi-phenyls); in turn, these laboratories should be able to demonstrate current certification of program quality, such as accreditation by the College of
American Pathologists, certification as a Medicare provider, or active participation in the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the American Association for Clinical Chemistry;

- Have access directly, or via contract, to radiology services, including over-reads by board certified radiologists and, for any asbestos exposure, radiologists certified for Ab-readings;

- Use certified, regularly calibrated equipment for pulmonary function testing, audiometry, and electrocardiography;

- Have mechanisms to avoid conflict of interest, such as self referral, in the services they provide (employees requiring followup care should be referred only to their own physician, or to other specialists with the concurrence of the employee’s own physician);

- Offer competitive prices for services;

- Are able to provide local access, or easy access arrangements, to services for the employees; this may involve having physicians visit the work site to provide services (e.g., when a sufficient number of examinations are to be conducted), or having employees travel distances that are deemed reasonable by the employees and management;

- Are available on an ongoing, timely basis to provide local clinical and occupational medicine consultation and guidance for management and employees; and

- Medical records MUST either be maintained by the physician or his/her clinic for the time periods required by regulation (e.g., the period of employment plus 30 years for services related to occupational exposures) and available for access using normal release of information procedures, or forwarded to NPS for incorporation into the employees formal personnel folder;

For most established clinical programs, such as a Federal Occupational Health Clinic, the above requirements will have been fully addressed and only need to be confirmed by the NPS manager seeking to enter into a contractual arrangement. In settings where the option of joining an existing program does not exist, the proposed physician or clinic should be willing to supply information that confirms their compliance with these basic expectations. Where questions arise about local options for clinical services, consultation may be sought with other nearby federal agencies for their experience in securing services, or the local medical society may be contacted for guidance on options. **Before arrangements are finalized for local contract services, the MRO should be consulted to confirm the appropriateness of the proposed clinical arrangements.**

**Certification of Other Clinical Staff**
Other clinical staff performing services with or for the examining physician must also be able to demonstrate their qualifications if services are not performed under immediate supervision of the physician. Such services specifically include audiometry and spirometry.

Consistent with 29 CFR 1910.95, audiometry are to be conducted either with a microprocessor audiometer, or by an individual who meets one of the following qualifications: 1) a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician; or 2) a technician who is certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation and is responsible to an audiologist, otolaryngologist, or physician.

Consistent with applicable sections of 29 CFR 1910 related to pulmonary function testing for occupational exposures to identified agents, persons providing such testing are to have successfully taken a NIOSH-approved course in spirometry.

**Certification of Laboratories**

As covered above under *Physician Qualification Standards/Credentials*, any laboratory providing services for NPS should be able to demonstrate current certification of program quality.

**Certification of Clinical Equipment**

As covered above under *Physician Qualification Standards/Credentials*, only certified, regularly calibrated equipment is to be used for pulmonary function testing, audiometry, electrocardiography, or other machine-assisted clinical procedures.

**Referrals to Sub-Specialists**

As covered above under *Examining Physician Qualification Standards/Credentials*, mechanisms must be in place so those clinical providers for employees avoid conflict of interest, such as self-referral. Employees requiring followup care for personal health problems or preventive health services should be referred only to their own physician, or to other specialists with the concurrence of the employee’s own physician. Referrals for conditions that relate to job performance or safety issues are to be managed or approved by the agency/program MRO.

**Data Systems**

As covered above under *Physician Qualification Standards/Credentials*, any provider of clinical services for employees must have a system of medical records in place that assures security and confidentiality, with release of any information from an employee’s record, or about an employee’s health status or clearances, only upon prior written consent from that employee. This consent should be obtained at the time of initial employee appointment.
Medical Records - Employee Medical File System

Management and Records Maintenance

All information in the employee medical file (whether stored in paper, electronic, photographic, or other means) must be considered confidential, and must be maintained in a manner that strictly controls access to the information, and assures the safety and integrity of those records. These confidential records may be found in several places, complicating the task of assuring confidentiality and security. Records may be found in medical, personnel, dispensary, safety, or other designated NPS offices, or in NPS, other Federal, or private health clinics where services have been provided.

The employee medical file (EMF) is to be maintained for the period of the employee’s services with NPS, and then is to be transferred to the National Personnel Records Center for storage or, as appropriate, transferred to the next employing Federal agency. Some records (e.g., certain medical surveillance or exposure records) must be maintained for extended periods of time (e.g., employment plus 30 years); others must be stored, but for lesser periods. regarding exposure and medical surveillance record storage requirements.

When medical services are provided by non-NPS personnel or programs (and commonly in non-NPS facilities), information should be maintained in the employees personnel folder that indicates the providers name, address, and phone number to facilitate locating and obtaining copies of records at a later date.

Confidentiality/Release of Records, General

This section covers the issue of releasing confidential client/patient information, including conclusions or opinions directly derived from such confidential information, to any person other than the employee covered by those records. Applicable references include the Privacy Act of 1974; 29 CFR 1910.20 (Access To Employee Exposure and Medical Records); and OPM/OVT-10 Employee Medical File System Records.

Employees must be provided access to their exposure and medical records. This access must be prompt (generally within 15 working days) and present no unreasonable barriers for the employee. If a physician representing the employee believes that direct employee access to certain sensitive information could be detrimental to the employee, the records are to be released to another health professional acceptable to the employee.

It is the policy of the NPS that all medical confidential information will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and subsequent amendments. At the time of their first NPS occupational health clinical service, all employees are to receive a Privacy Act Notice Form which outlines the specific conditions under which information may be disclosed. Employees
who already have received clinical services, but who have not yet had the opportunity to complete a Privacy Act form, should be offered the form at the time of their next clinical service.

Without a signed consent from the subject employee, no confidential information will be released to, or shared with individuals other than: 1) authorized Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) officials; 2) health professionals within the NPS-arranged system of care who have a justified, programmatic need to know; and 3) other individuals in the Department with a specific, official need to know, as summarized in the published Departmental Manual (370 DM 293.4) or the system of records notice for the custodian of the confidential records. The NPS system of care may include Federal employees or contracted health professionals who work as representatives of NPS.

**Authorization for Disclosure**

All individuals who are to receive medical examinations or other non-emergency services (for which *any* medical or summary information is to be forwarded to recipients other than the employee him/herself) will be required first to sign and date an Authorization for Disclosure of Information form (a consent form) before any services are provided. The employee on the Disclosure of Information form must specifically authorize the nature and scope of the information to be released to the agency before the information is released. No medical information, including summary information derived from medical records, may be released to NPS management, or to others, without this signed consent form.

For some NPS job categories (e.g., law enforcement), a release to the agency of the entire medical record may be necessary. This must be noted on the consent form for the release of the information (signed prior to the provision of clinical services) so the employee understands that this release will take place. In most cases, however, the release will be more limited. For these limited releases, it is suggested that the statement of the intent and nature of information to be disclosed include the following language:

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A Summary of the occupational health-related findings from the (specify type of) exam, including the resulting clearances, recommendations, and suggested followup.

The OSHA has provided guidance regarding the content of this limited information that may be appropriate to release to an employer regarding the results of a medical evaluation. The physician’s written opinion to the employer should include:

- Whether [or not] the employee has any medical condition that would place the employee at increased risk from occupational exposure;
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Limitations to assigned work or use of protective equipment;

A statement that the employee has been informed of the results of the medical examination; and, if exposures warrant,

A statement that the employee has been informed of the increased risk of lung cancer attributable to the combined effect of smoking and asbestos exposure.

With this limited release, the physician’s written opinion to the employer should NOT reveal specific findings, test results, or diagnoses unrelated to occupational exposures. For other releases (such as a copy of the entire record, or clinical data regarding a specific diagnosis), the disclosure form similarly should describe the specific nature of the information to be released, so the employee is able to grant (or withhold) informed consent to the release of information.

Refusal to Authorize Disclosure

If an employee chooses not to sign a consent form (which is their right), clinical services and resultant clearances will be withheld (e.g., to use a respirator, or to perform specified jobs, such as law enforcement, where a clearance is required) and the employee’s supervisor will be informed so that any necessary and appropriate personnel action may be initiated.

HIV/AIDS

It is important to note that a general consent form to release medical records DOES NOT include the release of records dealing with HIV and/or AIDS, or substance abuse diagnosis and/or treatment, unless those subject areas are explicitly included in the signed consent by the subject individual.

Request for Copies

Surviving Spouse

If a request for copies of records is received from the surviving spouse of a deceased employee, the request, and a copy of the requested information, must be sent to a departmental Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) coordinator for review. The FOIA coordinator will release the copy of the records after masking any information that is not pertinent to the employee’s occupational or medical health.

Employee’s Representative

If a request for copies of records is received from any individual other than the employee or surviving spouse, that person must have been granted power of attorney by the employee.
information may be released if the power of attorney is unrestricted (general power of attorney), or if it specifically covers confidential information. A request for information release under this circumstance must be accompanied by a signed copy of the power of attorney, a copy of which must remain in the medical record along with a summary of which documents were released.

**Data Systems and Analysis**

The data systems in support of the DOI/NPS occupational health program are evolving rapidly, and efforts are being made to accommodate currently-available technology in distributing program information, gathering pertinent program data, and conducting reviews of program statistics and progress with addressing the DOI/NPS mission. The data elements for the occupational health program are specified, or indicated, throughout this *reference manual*.

One data system currently under development is the Safety Management Information System (SMIS), an Internet accessible accident reporting system of the OMRPS. This system allows the local manager immediate access to accident reports that are stored in an electronic database. Information in the reports can be changed or corrected, as appropriate, and then entered into the permanent accident report database for tracking and report generation. This system will be coordinated with other on-line databases under development by OMRPS, and will contribute to the program management and quality assurance functions of the national and local occupational health programs, as presented in other sections of this *reference manual*.

The content of this Tab will be developed further as the specific data systems are implemented.

**Medical Evaluations**

**Preplacement/post conditional/Baseline Medical Evaluation**
(for Candidates and Employees of Positions having Medical Standards)

- Schedule medical exam after successful completion of: application and interview;
- Provide candidate with authorization for medical exam, time, date, and place.
- Send examining physician appropriate exam contents and reporting forms.
- Examining Physician to return report directly to MRO;
MRO will review data and recommend a finding of any of the following:

- Medically Qualified;

- Not Medically Qualified (Candidates not medically cleared will not be considered further);

**Inconclusive** - Results from medical exam inconclusive, and require followup information (MRO through NPS will request additional medical information be provided by the applicant at the Government expense (i.e., repeat audiograms or cardiologist’s review of abnormal EKG’s, etc.). No medical decision is possible until this medical information is provided. Applicant will be provided an additional 60 days to resubmit information directly to MRO. Failure to submit information will result in a recommendation of Not Medically Qualified.

  Recommendations of medically qualified will be final decisions and forwarded directly to the applicant, servicing personnel office, and Human Resources Program Manager. Results of inconclusive will be forwarded to applicant, servicing personnel office, and Human Resources Program Manager, and request additional information. Results of Not Medically Qualified will be forwarded to the Human Resources Program Manager for final decision.

**Candidates for Admission to Training Programs**

Check records to verify successful completion of timely (medical clearance within time schedule for individuals age) previous medical clearance within established guidelines.

Refer to guidelines for training program i.e., some programs may involve higher (stricter) medical standards than those already cleared for. (re. diving, high altitude SAR etc.)

If necessary, schedule for medical exam after preliminary acceptance into program;

Provide candidate with authorization for medical exam, time, date, and place. Send examining physician appropriate exam contents and reporting forms. Examining physician to return report directly to MRO.

MRO will review medical data and make a recommendation. Results will be forwarded to NPS and communicated via letter to incumbent. Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) must approve medical disqualification.

- Medically Qualified;
Not Medically Qualified (Candidates not medically cleared will be disqualified and will not be considered further);

**Inconclusive** - Results from medical exam inconclusive, and require followup information (MRO through NPS will request additional medical information be provided by the applicant at the government expense, i.e. Repeat audiograms or cardiologist’s review of abnormal EKG’s, etc. No medical decision is possible until this medical information is provided. Applicant may be given time limit (60 days) to provide.

**Periodic Medical Evaluations**

Schedule a medical exam for each incumbent according to the scheduled time period for the incumbent’s age group, as listed in the incumbents guiding standard/s. Use incumbent’s birth date as reference point and schedule medical examination within 1 month of birthday.

. **Periodicity**
  - Under age 40 - every 2 years
  - 40 and above - every year

. Provide incumbent with authorization for medical exam, time, date, and place.

. Send examining physician appropriate exam contents and reporting forms.

. Examining physician to return report directly to MRO.

. MRO will review data, and make a recommendation.

. Results will be forwarded to NPS, which will review determination and communicate via letter to incumbent.

. **Acceptable:** No significant medical issues vis-a-vis medical standards for position;

Medical findings relate only to personal health issues. Should consult with personal physician. No followup report required. All followup medical examinations and costs are the option and responsibility of employee.

. **Unacceptable:** Significant medical issues vis-a-vis medical standard for position. Employee must have immediately be restricted from performance of rigorous duties.
Short-term medical issues - restrict duties to resolve or cure temporary medical condition or while continuing to collect medical information;

Long-term/permanent medical condition - incumbents medically disqualified are subject to personnel action including, but not limited to:

- Reconsider/appeal of medical disqualification
- Accommodation of medical condition in existing position or new position
- Disability retirement
- Other retirement
  - Reassignment if available
- Removal

Inconclusive: Medical findings may relate to safe and efficient job performance.

Followup medical reports must be submitted to the MRO within reasonable time period (30-60) days. All costs are the responsibility of the Government;

Medical Surveillance Examinations - Any employee, according to risk exposure

Procedure

- Schedule a medical exam for any incumbent exposed to a listed agent.
- Provide incumbent with authorization for medical exam, time, date, and place.
- Send examining physician appropriate exam contents and reporting forms. Examining physician to return report directly to MRO, if medical standards for the position exist. If no medical standards exist, NPS safety managers will provide medical consultant to park managers and medical exam results will be forwarded directly to designated medical consultant.
- MRO or medical consultant may order or request further tests and/or Fitness For Duty Examination if warranted.

Return to Duty and Fitness For Duty Medical Evaluations - All employees

Procedure
In consultation with MRO, schedule a medical exam for any incumbent according to criteria listed above.

Provide incumbent with authorization for medical exam, time, date, and place.

Send examining physician appropriate exam contents and reporting forms.

Examine physician to return report directly to MRO, if medical standards for position exist. If not, report to be sent to medical consultant identified by NPS safety manager.

MRO or medical consultant will review data, and make a recommendation. Results will be forwarded to appropriate NPS manager who will make a determination and communicate via letter to incumbent.

Acceptable: No adverse medical findings.

Medical findings relate to personal health. Incumbent may be advised to consult with personal physician. No followup report required. All followup costs are the option and responsibility of employee.

Inconclusive: Medical findings may relate to safe and efficient job performance.

Followup medical reports must be submitted to the MRO or medical consultant within (30-60) days. Costs associated with followup reports are responsibility of the Service.

Medical findings are unacceptable:

- Short-term - restricts duties to resolve temporary conditions or while continuing to collect information;

- Long-term/permanent - incumbents not medically cleared are subject to medical disqualification and personnel action including, but not limited to:
  - Reassignment;
  - Appeal and Reconsideration of disqualification;
  - Accommodation of medical condition;
  - Disability Retirement
  - Removal
Further discussion of addressing medically disqualification may be found below.

**Reconsideration and Reasonable Accommodation**

Medical evaluations recommendations are initially made by the MRO and approved by the Human Resources Program Manager (or designee). Appeals of evaluations of unacceptable may be made to the Human Resources Program Manager within 30 calendar days of notice of disqualification. Upon notice of unacceptable evaluation, parks/offices must immediately remove the employee of rigorous duties. Appeals may request any of the following:

**Reconsideration**

Applicants or employees may request a reconsideration of a medical evaluation of unacceptable if further medical evaluations, treatment, and/or testing conducted by medical professionals result in a medical conclusion that the medical condition does not exist or is no longer disqualifying. Costs that relate to further medical examination to reconsider a long term/permanent finding of unacceptable are the responsibility of the employee. Costs that relate to further medical examination to clarify a finding of inconclusive or to reconsider findings other than long term/permanent unacceptable are the responsibility of the Service.

Reconsideration will also be provided when significant but correctable medical conditions exist which are subsequently corrected or resolved satisfactorily. A satisfactory medical resolution means that the disqualifying condition has changed or no longer is present, such that the individual is now medically capable of safely performing all duties of the position.

Following recovery or resolution of the disqualifying medical condition, the individual has 90 days to present medical documentation that the condition has been corrected or is no longer present. The individual is then eligible for consideration for entry into positions, training programs, or assignments for which s/he now meets all medical requirements. Documentation of full recovery or resolution of the disqualifying medical condition must the submitted to the Human Resources Program Manager and will be forwarded to the MRO for evaluation and consultation.

**Reasonable Accommodation**

Accommodations may be considered in each instance of medical evaluation finding of unacceptable of employees when there is sufficient evidence that the full range of essential duties of the position can be performed without endangering the health and safety of the individual or others. If there is sufficient evidence to establish that the
disqualified employee is or could be a qualified individual with disability, the employee’s supervisor and/or manager may propose reasonable accommodation. A qualified individual with disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the position in question without endangering the health and safety of the individual or others. If there is not sufficient evidence to establish that the employee is a qualified individual with disability, the employee is responsible for requesting and proposing the accommodation. The superintendent will review the request and forward it and his/her recommendation to the Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) for consideration by the MSB. The MSB will review requests for reasonable accommodation prior to implementation.

The Service shall make reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of the employee who is a qualified individual with disability unless it can be demonstrated that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on program operations. Reasonable accommodation may include, but shall not be limited to making facilities readily accessible to and usable by individuals with handicaps, job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, appropriate adjustment or modification of examinations, the provision of readers and interpreters, and other similar actions. In determining whether an accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the Service factors to be considered include the overall size of the agency's program with respect to the number of employees, number and type of facilities and size of budget, the type of agency operation, including the composition and structure of the agency's work force; and the nature and the cost of the accommodation.

**Second Opinion**

If the employee is medically disqualified based upon the results of a medical examination, s/he can request another examination, limited to the area of concern (causing the medical evaluation finding of unacceptable). The second examination will be conducted either by a physician mutually acceptable to the NPS and the employee or by a physician of the employee’s choice. If a mutually acceptable physician is used, costs for further medical examination are the responsibility of the Service. If the employee elects to use a physician of choice, (a physician not acceptable to the NPS due to qualifications, cost, distance, or time considerations), the examination will be conducted on the employee’s time and at the employee’s expense.

After the second medical examination, any further medical testing, medical specialists, additional expert consultants, and other diagnostic techniques requested or needed to rule out disqualifying conditions or to rebut the medical findings of the first two examinations, if not deemed necessary by the MRO, are the responsibility of the employee. The results of the second examination will be submitted for review and recommendation to the MRO. That recommendation will be
submitted to the Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) for decision. The employee will be allowed 60 days from the notice of failure to meet the medical standards, to provide this information to the agency. However, during the period of reconsideration, the employee may not be assigned rigorous duties of the position (for law enforcement and fire fighting positions, duties that would qualify for primary enhanced retirement coverage).

 Appeals

Appeals of medical evaluation determinations and denials of requests for reasonable accommodation will be made to the MSB. The MSB will be appointed by the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, and Associate Director, Administration. It will consist of the Program Manager, (Chief) Ranger Activities (or designee), the Law Enforcement Program Manager, a senior NPS safety manager, the MRO, and Human Resources Program Manager (or designee). The Human Resources Program Manager (or designee) will serve as board chairperson.

The MSB will meet regularly to review appeals of medical evaluation determinations and requests for reasonable accommodation. The MSB will consider the written record of the evaluation and written submission by the employee and/or oral presentation by the employee. Oral presentations are to be made at least cost to the Service and utilize teleconference or video-conference in lieu of travel.

An employee has the right to be accompanied, represented and advised by a representative of his/her choice at any stage of the appeal proceeding. Designation or change of representative must be made in writing to the MSB chairperson. If the employee chooses another employee of the Department as representative, and that person is willing to serve, permission must be granted unless such representation would: (a) conflict with the priority needs of the Service by contributing appreciably to neglect of the representative’s duties, (b) constitute a clear conflict of position, or conflict of interest; or (c) cause unreasonable cost to the Government. Supervisors or managers may not represent employees. If an employee’s representative is disallowed, the employee may request reconsideration by the Human Resources Program Manager.

The board chairperson will be designated as the deciding official in such determinations and spokesperson for the decisions of the Board before any third party.

 Medically Disqualified

In the event an employee has a medical evaluation finding of unacceptable, long term, the employee is disqualified from holding a rigorous duty position. It is the policy of the Service to take appropriate action to remove the disqualified employee from the position in a manner which
is least punitive to the employee. Appropriate action will be considered in following order:

**Reassignment** - When an employee becomes unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position even with reasonable accommodation due to a disability, an agency shall offer to reassign the individual to a funded vacant position located in the same commuting area and serviced by the same appointing authority, and at the same grade or level, the essential functions of which the individual would be able to perform with reasonable accommodation if necessary unless the agency can demonstrate that the reassignment would impose an undue hardship on the operation of its program. In the absence of a position at the same grade or level, an offer of reassignment to a vacant position at the highest available grade or level below the employee's current grade or level shall be required, but availability of such a vacancy shall not affect the employee's entitlement, if any, to disability retirement pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 8337 or 5 U.S.C. 8451. If the agency has already posted a notice or announcement seeking applications for a specific vacant position at the time the agency has determined that the nonprobationary employee is unable to perform the essential functions of his or her position even with reasonable accommodation, then the agency does not have an obligation under this section to offer to reassign the individual to that position, but the agency must consider the individual on an equal basis with those who applied for the position.

Parks, regional offices and support offices are encouraged to utilize each others resources to provide for reassignment of medically disqualified employees outside local commuting areas.

**Disability Retirement** - The employee’s servicing personnel office will determine if the employee is eligible for disability retirement. Any employee eligible for disability retirement will be counseled by a park or central office human resources specialist who is a subject matter expert in retirement.

**Removal.** In the event no reassignment opportunities exist with the local commuting area, medically disqualified employees are subject to removal from a rigorous duty position.

*End of Part 1 – Medical Standards*
**Occupational Health and Fitness Program**

**Purpose**

In order to manage the broad spectrum of park resources and to provide routine and emergency services to the visiting public, the NPS employs a diverse, multi-skilled work force. The NPS is committed to providing good stewardship to its human resources, including assisting all employees in attaining peak effectiveness in their jobs.

Mission success depends on high quality employee performance, which relates directly to individual physical and mental health. The Secretary of the Interior, in his memorandum of December 11, 1989, said that "engaging in a program of regular exercise reduces risk of disease, lowers health care costs and improves employee morale and productivity."

The NPS endorses health and fitness programs that effectively use our limited resources to help achieve a healthy and fit work force. All NPS employees are encouraged to participate in approved health and fitness programs and to take full advantage of the physical exercise facilities and equipment provided by the Service.

The NPS recognizes the business value of a healthy, physically fit work force and encourages individual employees to seek the means to achieve and maintain healthy, vigorous lives, both on and off the job. The Service’s professionally developed employee health and fitness program will provide both a blueprint and vehicle for all NPS employees to achieve healthier lifestyles, which will enhance both individual and organizational effectiveness.

The Service recognizes that those employees who must meet mandatory medical standards and rigorous-duty physical fitness requirements, must have a fitness program. The Service will invest in enabling them to attain and maintain the health and fitness levels necessary for safe and efficient performance of their required duties. Rigorous-duty employees must be physically capable of performing their challenging duties in a safe and efficient manner.

**Objectives**

The NPS has the following five objectives for its health and fitness program:

- Develop and maintain optimal employee effectiveness and job performance through increased fitness and health.

- Reduce work time lost through illness, disability, or job dissatisfaction.

- Increase each participating employee's mental alertness and ability to absorb emotional and physical stress and reduce workplace tension,
• Promote each participating employee's morale and personal well being through improved health and fitness,
• Develop and maintain a work force capable of responding to the rapidly changing, increasingly difficult physical demands of emergency services work in parks by establishing and maintaining a vigorous law enforcement and firefighting work force as envisioned by Congress and demanded by the American public.

Legal Authority

Director’s Order #57

Overall Authorities for Program
• 5 United States Code (USC), Section 7901, 7903 and 7904
• 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 792

Agencies have the authority to establish health service programs and to use appropriated funds to establish and operate physical fitness programs and facilities. The agency's program may include, but is not limited to, physical fitness, wellness, health awareness, prevention of illness and disease, smoking cessation, correction of alcohol and drug abuse, medical surveillance, mental and emotional well-being, and adoption issues.

Establishment of Medical and Physical Qualifications
• 5 CFR 339
• DM 446, Chapter 2.1 as amended

Medical determinations pertaining to employability, including procedures for establishing standards and physical requirements, medical evaluation programs, the events under which medical examinations are appropriate and how medical information may be used in making employment decisions.

Requirement for and Payment of Medical Examinations
• 5 CFR 339

Specific information on obtaining medical information and requiring and paying for medical examinations.

Use of Duty Time for Participation in the Health and Fitness Program
• 5 U.S.C. 7901

Use of Appropriated Funds to Purchase Exercise Equipment and Memberships in Fitness Centers
• 5 U.S.C. 7901
• 16 U.S.C., Section la-2(a)
Agency authority to establish health service programs, including by contract, to promote and maintain the physical and mental fitness of employees. Included is the authority to purchase exercise equipment and, in cases where all other resources have been considered and are inappropriate, membership in fitness clubs.

**Important Note:** The prohibition in 5 U.S.C. 5946 against using appropriated funds to pay the membership dues of a Federal employee in a society or association does not prohibit a Federal agency from using funds to purchase access for its employee to a private fitness center's exercise facilities.

Several of these authorities are unique to the NPS and permit the agency to purchase recreational equipment, facilities and services for use by employees and their families located in isolated areas.

**Incentives**
- 5 U.S.C. 4501
- 5 CFR 451
- NPS and NPS Supplements to OPM guidance/regulations
- Section 201 of the Federal Employee Pay Comparability Act of 1991 (FEPCA), OPM Interim Regulations published on May 3, 1991

Incentive and award programs improve Government efficiency, economy and effectiveness by motivating employees. Variations on the traditional awards program may include, but are not necessarily limited to, on-the-spot or fast track awards, time off awards, and honorary recognition (plaques, trophies, etc.).

**Office of Workmen’s Compensation Programs (OWCP) Claims**
- 20 CFR, Employee Benefits

Provisions under which employees injured as a result of participation in the NPS Health and Fitness Program will be covered by the Federal Employees Compensation Act (FECA). Also included are the procedures to be followed in filing claims.

**Program Organization**

The health and fitness program for NPS employees is recognized as a critical component of a high quality public service program. It also is a critical component of the Service’s commitment to provide the best possible stewardship to our employees. The NPS Health and Fitness Program contains two major components:
**Mandatory Program** - All employees who perform rigorous and/or hazardous duties are required to participate in the NPS physical fitness program and any associated fitness testing programs, in order to perform satisfactorily in their position. Mandatory participation positions include positions whose duties include performing "emergency services:"

- Lifeguard
- SCUBA diver
- Law enforcement
- Search and rescue (SAR)
- Wildland and structural firefighter (arduous duty positions only) and
- Emergency medical services responders

**Voluntary Program** - All non-emergency service employees, especially employees performing physically challenging duties or working in environmentally challenging locations, are encouraged to participate in a voluntary health and fitness program. The Service will provide support, encouragement, information, and guidance to all those interested in participating in such a program.

**Mandatory Fitness Program**

5 CFR 339.203 authorizes agencies to establish physical requirements for positions with physically rigorous duties. The NPS has established the following criteria for its mandatory participation health and fitness program and fitness testing for all emergency service personnel:

- The continual maintenance of the physical fitness level required to safely perform rigorous duties is a responsibility of the individual employee.

- All employees who are assigned rigorous duties are required to participate in an individual fitness program.

- Prior to beginning a physical exercise/physical fitness program and prior to any physical fitness testing, employees must be cleared to participate by the MRO via the medical examination program.

- The assessment instrument and the acceptable fitness level for each emergency service (specific physical task ability) will be described in the appendix to this manual if and when they are developed and approved. Individual parks may identify and validate specific physical fitness measures that are accurate, task-related measures of specific tasks required within their park emergency operations, for those employees who must perform such duties with concurrence by the human resources program manager for the region.

- The basic physical fitness measurement tool for employees performing emergency services is the PEB of tests and the Work Capacity Test Series. The PEB and Work Capacity Test
Series will be used as a basic individual fitness benchmark for all emergency services employees, to provide individuals with a means of assessing their own fitness and to provide a means of developing and measuring the success of individual and park fitness programs.

NOTE: No personnel action may be based solely on the results of the PEB. The PEB is not an approved, validated task standard. Supervisors should view unsatisfactory results in the PEB as an indication that individual performance capability may need improvement and should logically pay closer attention to actual on-the-job performance. Park fitness coordinators should help employees unable to pass the PEB modify their exercise programs, provide advice on diet modifications, rest and relaxation techniques, and other means of encouraging and assisting employees to achieve fitness.

However, the Work Capacity Test Series tests are approved, work-validated standards and personnel actions may be based on the results of those tests. Persons failing those tests, at the appropriate fitness level for identified positions, should be reassigned to other less-arduous positions for which they meet fitness and qualification standards.

Continuing Implementation

Mandatory participation in a physical fitness program has been required for all NPS emergency services personnel since 1992. In some individual situations, it may still be necessary to gradually phase in a regular exercise regime in consultation with the park physical fitness coordinator. Within 1 year of this release, every emergency services employee (and especially every 6c-covered employee), will develop and implement a personalized physical fitness program in consultation with their park fitness coordinator. No matter what an individual’s current fitness level, the process of achieving fitness begins with the first step in the exercise program.

Medical science tells us that regular participation in a logically structured physical exercise program coupled with a good diet and adequate rest will achieve fitness and increase longevity. For all rigorous duty positions, individuals and supervisors must remain cognizant that it is the extreme physical challenge(s) presented by the duties of the position itself, not the standards of any test, that are the true pass/fail measures of fitness.

Law Enforcement Positions (Mandatory Participation)

Employees nominated to attend the FLETC (to receive mandatory basic law enforcement training) must pass both the law enforcement medical examination/standard and the PEB PRIOR to being nominated to FLETC training. Individuals selected for law enforcement positions must demonstrate their ability to pass the PEB (after passing the medical examination). Parks will again administer the PEB 1 month preceding the start of FLETC training and must certify recent successful PEB completion to the NPS Superintendent of law enforcement training at FLETC before the candidate arrives there. All candidates are required to take a medical examination and the PEB shortly after arrival at FLETC. Failure to pass the medical examination or the PEB at that time will result in removal from basic law enforcement training and sent back to their original park. While attending law enforcement training, regular physical training is provided.
and all trainees are encouraged to improve their PEB scores prior to graduation. After FLETC graduation and commissioning, all law enforcement commissioned employees are enrolled in the mandatory physical fitness program and the medical surveillance program. Commissioned employees are expected to maintain their physical fitness throughout their careers in law enforcement positions.

**Other Emergency Services**

Employees in all the following emergency service positions are subject to the provisions of the mandatory program. The basic emergency services standard is the PEB along with the target levels developed by the FLETC. This instrument has not been task validated but will be used as a means of familiarizing participants with the assessment process. Ultimately, validated physical standards will be developed for a variety of occupations and all affected personnel will be required to meet them according to criteria set forth in each.

All emergency service personnel must adhere to this standard at minimum, along with those in their individual occupations/job functions that exceed it.

**SCUBA Diving**

SCUBA Divers are subject to this chapter and Director’s Order 4.

**Structural Firefighting**

Structural firefighters are subject to this chapter.

**Wildland Firefighting**

Wildland firefighters are subject to this chapter and Director’s Order 18, Wildland Fire Management.

**Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

EMS responders who routinely respond to EMS incidents are subject to this chapter.

**SAR**

NPS SAR personnel in positions requiring arduous and/or hazardous duties are subject to this chapter. Including but not limited to searchers, skiers, rope handlers, litter-bearers, swimmers, climbers, cavers, dog handlers, rappellers, field-team leaders. Park managers and/or Incident Commanders should identify which other local SAR positions will be covered by this chapter. Any positions exempted from fitness requirements should be identified ahead of time. The intent of this section is to help ensure the safety and efficiency of the individual, his or her co-workers, and the operation.

**Lifeguards**
Lifeguards are subject to the requirements of this chapter and established local standards.

**Incidental Responders**

Employees who assist only rarely with emergencies and who do not have emergency response requirements in their position descriptions (i.e., perform emergency duties *incidentally* or as an occasional collateral duty), are not included in the mandatory participation physical fitness program. Although they may occasionally act in an emergency operations role, their position’s primary duties do not require them to provide emergency services, nor to serve as members of designated emergency teams, nor to possess special certifications, qualifications, training, or commissions, nor to regularly perform emergency response duties.

Although incidental responders are not required to participate in the mandatory fitness program, it is highly recommended they take part in the voluntary program. Park supervisors are encouraged to identify capable employees to serve as incidental responders as a part of their contingency planning. It is appropriate and recommended that parks have identified incidental responders participate in the PACK test, if they are likely to be called upon to perform an emergency function requiring stamina, endurance, high aerobic capacity, or a function subject to high stress. Such testing should take place regularly, not just immediately prior to call-out. Only persons with Work Capacity Test Series scores indicating an ability to perform arduous duties should be asked to perform arduous tasks.

**Critical Incident Teams Stress Management**

There are specialized response teams trained and ready to respond to critical incidents involving law enforcement, search and rescue, wildland fire, and other emergencies. These teams may have written training standards, objectives, skill requirements, and mandatory competencies that are unique to their role and function. Active team members are subject to the mandatory participation physical fitness program. In addition, team members must also meet team membership requirements including any established, valid medical and physical fitness standards and measures. Team managers engaged in the development of specific, valid medical and/or physical fitness requirements will consult with WASO/RAD concerning those requirements.

**Voluntary Fitness Program**

The voluntary physical fitness program is incentive based and goal-driven. All non-mandatory participation employees are encouraged to participate in this program. The personal health and wellness benefits to be gained by participation are immense, and the Service benefits as well. Managers are encouraged to support the program by means of flexible and alternative work scheduling, the granting of annual leave or leave without pay, disseminating information concerning community-based programs, offering in-house fitness and health education programs (at convenient times and locations), providing access to and use of Government-owned physical fitness facilities, and other appropriate means.

**Program Elements**
The NPS voluntary program must include the first two of the following elements; the remaining three may also be included:

- Medical and physical fitness screenings to evaluate current health and fitness levels and to develop baseline fitness information necessary to prepare individualized health fitness program.
- A signed liability release. A release is required for all employees using NPS-owned facilities or equipment to conduct physical exercise activities.
- Assistance with the cost of medical screening if funds are available.
- Counseling, guidance and assistance in the development and maintenance of personnel health and fitness plans.
- Twice per year fitness tests.

**Liability Waivers**

Voluntary program participants must sign a liability release waiver prior to entering the Government sponsored fitness program. Mandatory participants are involved in the program as part of their scope of employment, and do not need to sign a waiver.

**Health Screening for Mandatory and Voluntary Participation Programs**

Basically, physical exercise is a safe and desirable activity for most individuals. But it is nonetheless highly advisable to have an appropriate level of medical screening prior to starting an exercise program or taking an exercise test. The cost of all required medical examinations/screenings for mandatory program participants will be borne by the Government, will take place on Government time, and will be in compliance with the national standards and procedures set forth herein. Park managers are authorized, but not required, to use park funds for medical screening or physical examinations for voluntary participants.

Prior to entering either the mandatory or voluntary fitness program or being tested for aerobic capacity or other physical conditioning, participants must undergo the following health screening:

**Employees in Positions having Specific Medical Standards**

All employees in positions having specific medical standards, who are required to participate in the health and fitness program must undergo and complete the prescribed medical examination for their position and be cleared by the MRO prior to participation in the health and fitness program. Employees currently participating in a mandatory fitness program at the time specific medical standards for their position are adopted may continue to participate, but should obtain the required medical examination as soon as practical.

**Employees in Positions without Specific Medical Standards**
Emergency services employees required to participate in the health and fitness program and all employees volunteering to participate in the health and fitness program must take the following health screening:

- Employees **39 years or younger** and **presently active** in an aerobic conditioning program, **must** take the Heart Disease Risk Profile (RISKO) and PAR Q evaluations (see Exhibits 1 & 2) prior to entering the fitness program or participating in any physical fitness testing.

If RISKO indicates a score of "Risk Moderate" (31 or less) and all answers on PAR Q are **no**, the employee may test and participate.

If RISKO indicates a score of "Greater Than Average - Dangerous" (32 or higher) and/or one or more answers on the PAR Q are yes, then the employee needs a physician's clearance prior to entering the testing or fitness program.

- Employees **39 years or younger** but **not presently active** in an aerobics program, **must** obtain a physician's screening for arduous duties and a medical examination (including blood analysis) during the 18-month period prior to entering the required fitness program and **must** take the RISKO and PAR Q evaluations immediately prior to any aerobics test.

If RISKO indicates "Risk Generally Average" (24 or lower) and all answers on the PAR Q are **no**, the employee may test and participate.

If the RISKO indicates "Risk Moderate" and/or one or more of the answers on the PAR Q are **yes**, then the employee needs a physician's clearance prior to entering the testing or fitness program.

*NOTE*: For the purposes of health screening, the words **presently active** refer to the American College of Sports Medicine's definition of "physically active." Under that definition, a person who is active is someone who participates in vigorous exercise (jogging, skiing, walking, swimming, stair climbing, etc.) for a minimum of 20 minutes per day at least 3 days per week, and has done so far the immediate past 2 months or more.

- Employees, **40 years or older**, **must** obtain a medical examination (including blood analysis), **and** obtain a physician's clearance to participate immediately prior to entering the required fitness program.

After being cleared to enter the program, employees in this category (4) must take a medical examination **every 3 years**. The NPS MRO is authorized to require and/or permit medical examinations more often than every three years for those in high-risk medical categories, i.e., employees who have high-blood pressure or heart trouble, who have an inactive lifestyle, who are pregnant, or who have short or long-term physical/medical problems. Managers can obtain
the criteria to initiate a request for such a determination under the provisions provided in FPM 339.

- These required medical examinations are not intended to satisfy the medical examination requirement for occupations that have specific approved medical standards as a condition of employment. If and when specific medical standards are approved for a position, the medical examination results must be forwarded to the NPS MRO for a medical determination as to whether or not the applicant/employee meets medical standards. Through the use of a centralized MRO program, duplication of medical exams will be avoided.

**Medical Screening Examinations**

The health and fitness coordinator (HFC), or the supervisor, or servicing personnel office for those smaller areas without a HFC, must ensure required medical examinations are completed.

The HFC or program participant must inform the examining doctor of the purpose of the examination in order to assure a proper, thorough evaluation.

**Examination and Documentation**

- The HFC or person to be examined must provide the examining physician with the standard Department of the Interior Medical Surveillance Program Medical History and Examination Form and a letter requesting a medical examination. An SF-78 has also been developed for arduous and hazardous duty that covers all other emergency services.

- A blood analysis for cholesterol, LDL, triglycerides HDL, glucose, urea, lipids, and CBC should be requested as part of each examination. Voluntary screening for Lyme disease, HIV, and hepatitis may be conducted if an employee submits a written request for such test.

- The completed Medical History and Examination Form should be forwarded to an approved NPS MRO for all mandatory participants. Examining physicians may issue a clearance to participate in physical fitness programs or physical testing for all voluntary participants.

- Personnel and medical files and information must be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act standards.

**Individual Health and Fitness Programs**

**Assessment**

Once an employee has passed the health screening process, he or she is eligible to enter a park-sponsored Individual Health and Fitness Program. This begins with a physical fitness assessment comprised of the fitness tests developed for the activity to be performed (PEB or Work Capacity Test Series test) or locally developed general physical conditioning measures.
Participants should be tested by an employee trained and certified to administer physical fitness tests (the park HFC) twice a year. The HFC may administer tests more often if needed for motivational or confidence-building reasons. The results of the tests should be recorded on a "Fitness Test Results" form and kept in the employee's fitness file. It is the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to ensure this test is completed. All fitness files must be maintained in accordance with the Privacy Act (section 6311 of Title 5 of U.S.C.).

**Personalized Program Development**

Based on the results of the first test, the employee and the HFC should develop and agree upon an "Individual Health and Fitness Plan" (IHFP) to assist the participant in achieving higher fitness goals. Once an interim target goal is met, the IHFP should be updated to either a maintenance and/or improvement program. The written IHFP should be kept in the employee's fitness file.

The employee, his or her supervisor, and the HFC should identify activities to be accomplished during on-duty time. These can be physical work-related activities such as foot, ski, or kayak patrols; trail clearing; and so on; or a regular program of specific physical exercises, including such things as running, swimming, calisthenics, or weight lifting to be included in the IHFP.

In addition to on-duty activities, the employee and HFC should identify those fitness-related activities undertaken on off-duty time that will result in improvements in the targeted areas.

All the fitness activities to be undertaken should be outlined on the employee's IHFP.

Those employees having difficulty in meeting any of the minimum fitness goals should be monitored and assisted by the supervisor, HFC, or other relevant specialists. The employee is encouraged to re-test and modify his or her IHFP as often as necessary.

**Official Government-time Fitness Activities**

**Mandatory Participation Program**

Managers and supervisors may provide up to 3 hours per week of official duty time, in reasonable blocks of time, for mandatory-participation program employees to perform physical exercise. Pursuant to Director’s Order 18, those wildland firefighters whose full-time duties are 100 percent arduous duty-related (such as helitack, hotshot, engine, prescribed fire, smokejumper crews) will normally be provided 1 hour per day for fitness training. This Government contribution of paid time for physical exercise is to assist the employee in meeting the fitness requirements of the position. Fitness time may be scheduled on various workdays throughout the workweek, as recommended by the park health and fitness coordinator. A single long-duration activity conducted on 1 day, such as a ski or hiking patrol, may generally count for no more than 1 hour (of the 3 hours) of fitness time that week. A good physical conditioning regime requires various types of physical exercise to be performed.

The Service views physical exercise time as a major investment in park operations and in employee
health. Local supervisors should expect to get a reasonable return on that investment in terms of employee productivity. Employees must not view fitness time as “free time” and supervisors must not view fitness time as “wasted time.”

When feasible, mandatory fitness program time should be officially scheduled, but it is recognized that there is also a need to maintain flexibility so exercise time does not interfere with either employee or service responsibilities. Because emergency-services employees must be available to respond whenever an emergency occurs, the use of portable radios, pagers, or other means to alert exercising employees to emergencies should be considered. Exercise programs should not be scheduled or performed during those times when the employee's absence from regular work assignments would interfere with the performance of duties of co-workers. Overtime is not authorized for fitness training, and overtime cannot be granted for work unfinished because of fitness training. "Unused" fitness time may not carry forward to the next week for any reason.

It is the responsibility of the employed to ensure that all physical activities are performed in a satisfactory manner on duty, e.g., proper use of equipment, environmental stressors.

Reasonable use of the designated exercise time toward achieving the goals of the program should be the objective of both supervisors and employees. Everyone should keep in mind that fitness time is regular duty time, fully under the control of supervisors and managers, who may direct the activities to be performed during such time. Each participant in a mandatory participation program must specify those types of physical training he or she will engage in while on Government time and, if required document the use of fitness time to the satisfaction of supervisors.

**Voluntary Participation Program**

Managers and supervisors cannot authorize the use of official duty time or administrative leave for voluntary fitness program activities except in cases of officially sponsored and approved programs or fitness events. OPM has mandated that the following policy apply for granting excused absences for participation in the voluntary health and fitness activities (FPM Letter 792-23):

- the activity should be officially administered, such as a Federal Fitness Day event or an agency sponsored health screening;
- the amount of excused absence in each instance should be a short period, and the activity for which excused absence is granted should be of a specific, fixed duration, such as annual health screenings, health and fitness fairs and exhibits, Federal Fitness Day, and health improvement activities involving a nutrition and smoking cessation program.
- an excused absence should not be granted for participation in an activity over an extended or indefinite period; the agency official approving the excused absence should determine that participation in the activity will likely benefit the organization; and
- the agency official approving the excused absence should ensure that the employee's absence will not interfere with the timely and effective performance of agency work and service to the
Managers and supervisors should accommodate, to the extent possible, flexible or alternate work schedules for employees participating in the voluntary physical fitness program. Approving annual leave for employees taking part in officially sponsored and administered health and fitness programs is encouraged.

Fitness Files

Each area should maintain a fitness file that should be kept by the HFC. The file should contain physical test results (not medical exam results), a copy of the IHFP, results of mandatory tests, and a record of utilized duty time (optional). The NPS MRO is responsible for maintaining employee medical records pertaining to medical standards. The HFC should refer questions and medical information to the NPS MRO. The examining doctor should forward all necessary medical records to the NPS MRO.

Roles and Functions

Occupational Health and Fitness Program Manager

The Occupational Health and Fitness Program Manager, Ranger Activities, Washington Office, is the contact point for all aspects of the NPS occupational health and fitness program.

Specifically, the manager will serve as the central authority for all program and policy determinations; the central point of contact for all external agency issues; and as the central clearing-house for the Occupational Health and Fitness Program.

The Occupational Health and Fitness Program Manager, designated by the Associate Director, Park Operations and Education, in conjunction with the NPS FLETC Superintendent and NIFC Program Manager, is responsible for:

- Implementing Director’s Order 57 and occupational medical and fitness standards and programs.
- Providing general medical, health and fitness information to field offices.
- Approving qualifications and protocols for HFCs.
- Representing the NPS on the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.
- Coordinating occupational medical, health and fitness management activities with the Department of the Interior, FLETC, NFIC and various outside agencies, committees, and other organizations.
• Providing a clearing-house on training techniques and equipment.

Regional Health and Fitness Program Managers

Regional health and fitness program managers designated by the respective regional directors, are responsible for:

/ Developing, implementing, and coordinating a regionwide program which meets the requirements of the Occupational Health and Fitness Program.
/ Managing the central office medical, health and fitness program, with an emphasis on providing assistance and technical support to individuals.
/ Disseminating all medical, health and fitness releases, policy statements, and related materials to parks and service centers.
/ Maintaining liaison with the medical, health and fitness community.

The regional office HFC should possess knowledge, skills, and abilities commensurate with the behavioral objectives of exercise leader certification, as defined by the American College of Sports Medicine. In order to be qualified, a coordinator must have a working knowledge of screening programs, monitoring, test administration, corrective actions, resources, advanced guidance, and safety.

Park Health and Fitness Program Managers or Coordinators

In general, each park must have a health and fitness program and every participant must have access to a designated trained HFC. Therefore, every park will need to designate a qualified employee to serve as HFC. However, because parks vary in size, complexity, isolation, and resource demands, some parks may not need a local designated HFC. Parks are encouraged to cooperate with one another so the necessary HFC services can be provided in the most cost-effective fashion. This assistance may come from consolidating areas under one HFC, using a HFC from an adjoining area, etc. It is recommended that parks with more than 10 employees participating in the health and fitness program designate one or more HFCs.

Park HFCs will not replace medical professionals or professional consultants. They are to act as an extension of such services and merely provide a first level focal point of lay assistance to the park and/or participating employees regarding basic fitness concerns and activities. They should be able to identify and contact sources for further guidance.

Park managers are responsible for the health and fitness programs within their park areas.

The designated park HFC is responsible for:

/ Examining and determining the park's occupational medical, health and fitness program needs.
Developing, implementing, maintaining and/or evaluating an internal park occupational medical, health and fitness plan. A committee approach is encouraged and recommended.

Providing assessments and fitness testing for both voluntary and mandatory program participants.

Recommending exercise and nutrition guidance for program participants, including goal setting, motivation, and fitness educational material.

Maintaining individual health and fitness plans and logs for program participants.

Qualifications of Park HFCs

The key positions in the NPS Health and Fitness Program are at the park level. The entire program rests upon the competency and dedication of the employees designated to coordinate the program at the park level. At a minimum, all park HFCs must attend and be certified under the physical fitness coordinator training program offered regularly at the FLETC and also be qualified as Work Capacity Test series Administrators.

In addition, HFCs should possess knowledge, skills, and abilities commensurate with the behavioral objectives of exercise leader certification, as defined by the American College of Sports Medicine. This approximately 40-hour training may be accomplished through several nationally recognized programs. This training should be completed immediately before appointment whenever possible.

Nominees for these positions must:

- possess an interest in health and fitness;
- be able to pass the PEB, and/or PACT Test
- serve as positive role models for participants;
- be active in all facets of the health and fitness program;
- be able to demonstrate proper fitness protocols; and
  - acquire and share the knowledge and information necessary to assist employees in meeting their health and fitness goals.

It is important that managers select a park HFC who is interested in health and fitness, but who at the same time does not give the appearance of being a "health zealot" to others.

Attaining Fitness, Overcoming Negativity

The Health and Fitness Program is a positive incentive-filled program designed and intended to encourage and motivate participation and success. Parks are encouraged to provide support and
helpful encouragement to all employees in their pursuit of healthy lifestyles and physical fitness. The program is intended to educate and stimulate participation and the attainment of individual goals. Only in the most severe situations should supervisors have need to resort to the mandatory aspects of the program in order to overcome negativity and recalcitrance.

Mandatory participants in the fitness program are required to take the assessment instrument (PEB and/or PACK Test) as prescribed and to participate fully in an individual fitness program designed to assist them in attaining fitness goals. Regardless of an employee’s present physical condition, fitness can and will inevitably be attained through regular participation in the health and fitness program.

A mandatory participant who cannot take the assessment instrument or cannot participate in his/her individual fitness program due to physical or medical reason(s), must inform his/her supervisor. Supervisors must then confirm the medical basis for non-participation through medical documentation provided by the employee and reviewed by the MRO.

Should a mandatory participant demonstrate inability physically to perform the full range of his/her duties safely, those performance shortcomings should be documented and may be used as the basis for personnel actions or a Performance Improvement Plan. Personnel sanctions are available in cases of refusal to participate in the prescribed manner, however, the basis for this action is conduct, not performance.

**NOTE:** Personnel actions regarding medical/physical standards MUST be based on approved validated standards. The basis for this action will be the medical opinion and advice of the MRO as approved by a senior NPS official, the specific job requirements, the safety of the individual and others, and the agency responsibility to mission accomplishment.

**Fitness Equipment and Exercise Facilities**

A clean, safe, appropriate, cost-effective location should be provided for employees to perform physical exercise. Exercise facilities should contain at least a minimum of fitness equipment to enable individuals to attain and maintain fitness. Ideally, exercise facilities would be located in or near all parks and near park employee work areas. Parks may provide equipment and facilities directly or employees may use local health clubs or facilities at nearby military installations, colleges, or other institutions. The decision about which facilities will be used, whether or not the park will invest in equipment, the type of equipment provided, and so on is a park management decision.

Voluntary program participants may be permitted to join, at their own expense, a group membership in a health club (if one is established for individuals in the mandatory program). Voluntary program participants may be permitted to use NPS-owned facilities and equipment, if authorized by the superintendent.
Voluntary program participants, their immediate families, and any others in the community who are authorized by the superintendent to use NPS equipment and facilities must request in writing from the superintendent or designee permission to use the NPS fitness facilities.

Federal procurement regulations require fitness equipment be purchased exclusively from the GSA Purchase Schedule, section 78I-A. Exceptions require agency justification, and applications for waivers must go to GSA through the NPS procurement process.

Exercise equipment donated to the Service or acquired from other agencies is the property of the Government. Such property is controlled and accounted for per Federal Property Management Regulation 410 DM 114-60 and applicable NPS guidelines and directives.

Each area with a workout center is responsible for ensuring that adequate safety and emergency plans and procedures exist for the facility, and that equipment is maintained in a safe condition.

Both the Public Health Service and GSA may be contacted to develop fitness facilities in a Government-owned or leased building. These agencies have already established standards for the development and maintenance of such facilities

**Health Club Memberships**

The HFC should check the possibility of using other low-cost alternatives to Government-owned facilities. In areas where it is not feasible to provide either a military or civilian exercise facility, persons in the mandatory participation program may utilize a private fitness center. If a health club is chosen, certain standards should be met. The club should:

- have shower and locker room facilities, aerobic training machines, and equipment to work the major muscle groups;
- provide services that are cost-effective in comparison with the alternatives; and
- be geographically desirable.

Agreements must be made in the name of the NPS and not the individual using the membership. Procurement and contractual obligations must be in compliance with Director’s Order 62.

**Appendices**

**Physical Standards**

**PEB**

**Forms**

- PARQ
- RISKO