



Fire Management Board

FIRE MANAGEMENT BOARD

FMB Memorandum No. 20-015

2 November 2020

TO: Fire Management Board Members  
FROM: Leon Ben Jr., Chair, Fire Management Board  
SUBJECT: Requirements and COVID-19 Mitigations for Medical Exams, Work Capacity Tests and Critical Training for the 2021 Fire Season

The purpose of this memo is to provide the interagency wildland fire community with an update to FMB Memorandum 20-001.

### **Background**

FMB memo 20-001 adjusted or deferred typical pre-season fire preparedness requirements in order to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for the 2020 fire season. While the risk of COVID-19 exposure remains, there are also risks associated with further deferral of medical exams, work capacity tests, and training. There is no evidence the requirements for new employees outlined in FMB Memo 20-001 caused undue exposure to the virus or led to infection, and the fire community has successfully achieved its mission without experiencing widespread COVID-19 outbreaks or spread from medical exams and training. Therefore, the goal for 2021 is to resume pre-season preparedness while safely mitigating the risk of COVID-19 exposure to the greatest extent possible.

### **2021 Requirements**

The following actions and mitigations are required for all wildland firefighters prior to receiving a 2021 red card.

### **Medical Clearance**

#### **DOI:**

Medical exams that were deferred in 2020 will be required by December 31, 2020. Career seasonal and temporary seasonal employees not in pay status may complete their exams upon returning to pay status or as otherwise directed. As of January 1, 2021, the medical standards process will revert back to previous policy direction – exam required every 3-years (36-months) and self-certification in non-exam years.

Local units with concerns regarding potential COVID-19 exposure risk associated with medical exams may contact their bureau Wildfire Safety Program Manager.

## **FS:**

Medical exams that were deferred in 2020 will need to be completed in 2021 for those that received new waivers in 2020. As of January 1, 2021, the medical clearance process will revert to the HSQ/OF-178 clearance process as conducted prior.

## **Work Capacity Tests**

Work capacity tests at the light, moderate and arduous levels are required for 2021. COVID-19 mitigations may include:

- Pre-screen participants using the [Wildland Fire COVID-19 Screening Tool](#).
- Socially distance participants for the duration of the test. This may require testing of smaller groups at the same time, staggered start times, and/or modified routes.
- Use individually issued backpacks, vests or bladder bags; there should be no sharing or reusing of equipment for same day use.
- If sharing and reusing must occur, follow appropriate cleaning protocols and allow several days between using to ensure the virus is not present.

## **Training**

Critical training, including training that was deferred in 2020, should be resumed whenever possible. The NWCG Training Delivery Committee is currently prioritizing critical courses and developing alternative course delivery methods. Virtual or online learning is the preferred delivery method, however, in person training, with appropriate COVID mitigations, will be required in some cases.

Mitigations for in-person training may include:

- Screening participants using the [Wildland Fire COVID-19 Screening Tool](#).
- Limiting the number of students and trainers
- Requiring social distancing and mask use.
- Holding training sessions outdoors and/or in areas with good air flow.
- Wearing gloves and sanitizing all shared touch items.

First Aid, CPR, Blood Borne Pathogen and other medical training:

- Follow the requirements of the certifying entity (American Red Cross, American Heart Association, etc.).

RT-130 and fire shelter deployment training:

- Use virtual delivery methods for RT-130 classroom sessions.
- Complete practice deployment individually, not in teams.
- Consider using out of service fire shelters for deployment training.
- Purchase additional practice shelters if necessary, as multiple uses on same day is not recommended.
- If practice shelters must be reused, follow MTDC sanitization procedures.

Please contact your bureau or office for more specific information or requirements.

**Distribution:**

Frank Guzman, Chair, National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

Josh Simmons, Chair, National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC)

Patty Grantham, USFS National Director of Fire and Aviation Management

Jeff Rupert, Director, Office of Wildland Fire (OWF)