



To: Phillip Spottswood, JD, MPH OPM Medical Policy and Programs

From: USFS and DOI Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualifications/Standards Programs

Date: 8/30/2013



Dear Dr. Spottswood:



The purpose of this letter is to affirm the applicability of the Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards for all arduous duty personnel within The U.S. Forest Service and The Department of the Interior. In 2009 the Interagency Medical Standards Program was separated into two programs, the U.S. Forest Service Medical Qualifications Program and the Department of the Interior Medical Standards Program. Through the separation process the interagency medical standards remained intact; however, minor revisions to the medical standards document were required to provide flexibility in how each program carries out components of its examination process. All revisions are consistent with recommendations discussed at the June 2013 Interagency Medical Standards Team meeting. An updated version of the interagency medical standards document and a copy of core expectations shared across the USFS and DOI for arduous Firefighters are enclosed. We seek the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) approval of these documents. Upon approval, we also request the OPM website be updated to reflect the most current information.



Please contact either of us for any additional documentation you may need. We look forward to your approval.

Thank you,



Handwritten signature of L. Kaili McCray in blue ink.

L. Kaili McCray, PhD, MPH, MHE
IMST Chair/DOI MSP Manager

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Symonds in blue ink.

Jennifer Symonds, D.O., Medical Officer
USFS Fire and Aviation Management

Core Expectations for U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior Arduous Duty Wildland Firefighters

- U. S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior arduous duty Wildland Firefighter personnel must be ready, willing and able, at any given moment, to perform the full range of essential duties and responsibilities of their position, under the sometimes harsh, unforgiving, unpredictable and at times life-threatening conditions, under which those duties are required to be performed safely and efficiently. This requirement extends to: (a) nationwide availability; (b) 24 hour availability or after hours call back; and (c) the ability to perform full unrestricted arduous duty Wildland Firefighter duties.
- Arduous duty Wildland Firefighter incumbent personnel must be ready, willing and able to perform essential, critical functions that are rarely, if ever required to be performed, but must be performed wherever and whenever essential. The frequency at which a task is performed is not the sole factor used to determine how essential/critical the task is to successful performance on the job. It can be a once in a lifetime occurrence. Just as an absence of documented real life situations and physical requirements does not diminish/eliminate the risk to individuals or to others. This includes, but is not limited to: parachuting into or performing work in a forest/range environment characterized as timbered/steep; extreme elevation changes, temperature ranges, smoke and dust conditions; strenuous physical exertion for extended periods including walking, climbing, shoveling, chopping, throwing, lifting and carrying packs for up to 10 miles through rugged terrain; and protection to persons and property.
- Arduous duty Wildland Firefighter personnel must be able to react and respond appropriately in time-sensitive situations that require:
 - Good judgment to make the right decisions under murky, ill-defined environmental conditions, with incomplete information at times, during extremely high stress levels that may be circumstantially induced;
 - Good cognitive problem solving skills
 - Demonstrated proficiency with fire suppression tools and techniques; and
 - Demonstrated ability to meet physical and medical fitness requirements of position.
- Arduous duty Wildland Firefighter personnel must maintain a minimum level of physical and medical fitness and readiness capabilities, and be able to demonstrate the ability to perform to maximum physical exertion in situations which warrant it and occur without warning.
- Arduous duty Wildland Firefighter personnel must be capable of performing duties that are dangerous and physically demanding under arduous or hazardous conditions. These duties and the conditions under which these duties are performed, require arduous duty Wildland Firefighter personnel have and maintain a high degree of physical fitness and mental alertness, and meet the established medical standards for these positions.