

## Getting Prepared for the Work Capacity Test



These training programs are for persons who have been sedentary before training for the work capacity tests or undertaking a weight loss or fitness program. All of the programs are based on the “average” individual. You may have to adjust the times, your rate of progression, and how much you do on any particular day. It is okay to do more or less depending on how you are feeling. We strongly recommend that you follow the general flow of each program and exercise the rule of patience. Progress modestly and you will maintain your health and improve your fitness.

Review the included Health Screening Questionnaire before you start training. If you cannot answer all questions in the affirmative, you should consult with a physician before undertaking the training regime.

Begin training at least 4 weeks before your test. Most of the training will simulate the activity of the test, gradually increasing the distance and the weight carried. Wear the same footwear during training that you will wear during the test.



### 1. Preparing for the Light Walk Test (1-mile in 16 minutes, no weight)

You will need to find a measured mile—a 1/4-mile (400-meter) track at a local school or park will do.

#### Week 1

**Day 1**—Walk one 1/4-mile lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for one lap. Your target time is 4 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then briskly walk another lap. Repeat five times.

**Day 2**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for 1½ laps. Your target time is 6 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then walk briskly for another 1½ laps. Repeat three times.

**Day 3**—Hike or walk continuously for 25 to 30 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day.

**Day 4**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for two laps. Your target time is 8 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then walk briskly for two laps. Walk slowly for another one-half lap.

**Day 5**—Hike or walk continuously for 30 to 35 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day.

**Day 6**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for 2½ laps. Your target time is 10 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then briskly for 2½ laps. Walk slowly for another one-half lap, then briskly for another 2½ laps. Finish by walking slowly for one-half lap.

**Day 7**—Hike or walk continuously for 30 to 35 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day.

## **Week 2**

**Day 1**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for three laps. Your target time is 12 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then time yourself walking briskly for two laps with a target time of 8 minutes or less.

**Day 2**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for 3½ laps. Your target time is 14 minutes or less. Walk slowly for one-half lap, then time yourself walking briskly for another 1½ laps with a target time of 6 minutes or less.

**Day 3**—Hike or walk continuously for 30 to 35 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day.

**Day 4**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for four laps. Your target time is 16 minutes or less. If you can do this, you have met the requirements for the Walk Test. We suggest that you continue training for another 3 days to help assure that you pass the Walk Test.

**Day 5**—Hike or walk continuously for 30 to 35 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day.

**Day 6**—Walk one lap to warm up. After the warmup lap, time yourself walking briskly for five laps or as far as you can, up to eight laps (2 miles). Maintain a pace of 4 minutes or less per lap.

**Day 7**—Hike or walk continuously for 30 to 35 minutes at a comfortable pace. This is an easy day. You are ready for the Walk Test. If it is not scheduled right away, maintain your training with 30 to 60 minutes of moderate walking on most days. Pace yourself at 4 minutes or less per lap for 1 to 2 miles at least twice a week.

## **2. Preparing for the Moderate Pack Test (2 miles in 30 minutes, 25-lb weight)**

You will need to find a measured 2-mile trail. Mile markers on a road will work if the road has a wide shoulder. A track at a local school or park also works well.

- Briskly hike a 2-mile flat course without a pack. Do this every other day until you can hike the course in less than 30 minutes.
- Wear a pack weighing 12 to 15 pounds on your training hikes. Continue to hike on alternate days until you can complete the 2-mile course with the light pack in less than 30 minutes.
- Gradually increase the weight in the pack for your training hikes. Adding 2 to 3 pounds each hike while maintaining the 30-minute pace for 2 miles will get you to your target within three to five sessions (1 to 1½ weeks). On the days between hikes, consider hiking hills (with your pack) to build leg strength and endurance, jogging, or participating in other physical activities. If you will be doing specific firefighting tasks, the days between your training hikes are a good time to begin practicing those activities.

## **3. Preparing for the National Arduous Pack Test (3-miles in 45 minutes, 45-lb weight)**

You will need to find a measured 3-mile trail. Mile markers on a road will work if the road has a wide shoulder. A track at a local school or park also works well.

Briskly hike a 3-mile flat course without a pack. Do this every other day until you can hike the course in less than 45 minutes.

Wear a pack weighing about 20 to 25 pounds during your training hikes. Continue hiking on alternate days until you can complete the 3-mile course with the light pack in less than 45 minutes. On alternate days begin hiking in hills, continue with job-specific training, or enjoy other physical activities.

Gradually increase the weight in the pack, adding 3 to 5 pounds each hike. Maintaining the 45-minute pace for 3 miles will get you to your target within five to seven sessions (1½ to 2 weeks). On the days between training hikes, take longer hikes in hills (wearing your pack) to build leg strength and endurance for the fire season, jog, or participate in other physical activities (such as mountain biking). Continue to train for specific fire tasks your crew will perform, such as line digging, brushing, sawing, and similar activities.

If you would like a more detailed training program, download the National Wildfire Coordinating Group publication, “Fitness and Work Capacity, 2009 Edition” from the internet. You will find more detailed training programs for each of the WCT levels in the appendices. The website is:

<http://www.nwccg.gov/pms/pubs/pms304-2.pdf>

