

Winston-Salem, North Carolina Fire Department

Firefighter Physical Ability Examination

Participant Study Guide



INTRODUCTION

This study guide is designed to describe the physical tasks you will be required to perform for the Winston-Salem Fire Department's Physical Ability Examination. You will increase your chances of obtaining a passing score if you spend some time properly preparing for the test. This includes thoroughly reviewing this study guide, following the specific directions regarding attire, paying proper attention to your physical well-being before the test, and taking care to avoid becoming overly anxious about the test.

OVERVIEW OF THE TESTING PROCESS

An analysis of the physical requirements of Winston-Salem Fire Department personnel was conducted using a statistically significant sample of incumbent employees across all branches and ranks of the department. The analysis provided the background information necessary to validate the job-related physical ability examination. It allowed for the identification of the essential physical functions required of the jobs, and these essential functions are included in the physical ability test.

Among other physical tasks, firefighters in the Winston-Salem Fire Department must be able to perform the following: crawl through smoky buildings; climb an aerial ladder; drag uncharged (dry) hose; perform forcible entry/ventilation procedures; carry a length of hose up stairs; descend stairs; drag charged (full of water) hose; carry a ladder; and drag a victim to safety.

This examination is equally valid for assessing the physical skills of participants with firefighting experience and those without. For example, one portion of the test requires the participant to drag a dummy 100 feet. It is not necessary to have prior experience as a firefighter to possess the physical ability to drag a heavy object.

Preparation instructions and a description of the physical ability test are provided below.

TEST PREPARATION

The following suggestions should help you prepare yourself physically for the test:

- For as long as possible before the test, candidates should exercise their cardiovascular system at least 30 minutes per day, five days per week. This exercise could take the form of speed walking, jogging/running, cycling, swimming, or the like.
- Avoid foods high in sugar, salt, and saturated fat, and maintain a well-balanced diet for several days before the test.
- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Pre-hydrate for 72 hours before the test by consuming about one-half ounce of water per pound of body weight per day. Avoid beverages high in artificial sweeteners, sugar or caffeine, and alcohol. Commercial sports drinks are not intended for pre-hydration. Do not drink a lot of liquids or eat a large meal immediately before the test.

WHAT TO WEAR

Participants should wear the following during the test:

- Sneakers
- Long-sleeve T-shirt
- Turnout coat (Provided by the Fire Department)
- Self-contained breathing apparatus (Provided by the Fire Department)
- Gloves (Provided by the Fire Department)
- Participants should NOT wear watches, rings or other jewelry. These items should be removed before testing for safety purposes.

Note: The Winston-Salem Fire Department will provide participants with the indicated gear and equipment necessary to participate in the testing process, and an assortment of sizes will be available to ensure a reasonable fit for all participants.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TEST

The test will require a participant to complete several physical tasks in sequence within an allotted time frame, as well as to complete two untimed tasks. All applicants will be given an orientation and walk through prior to taking the test. No one will be allowed to take the test unless he/she is fully aware of what he/she is expected to do.

During the sequence of timed events, it is extremely important to pace yourself. Overexerting yourself early in the test may reduce the amount of energy you have left for exercises at the end of the test, such as the victim rescue. For safety reasons, participants are not permitted to run between events.

TEST EVENTS

UNTIMED EVENTS:

Note: Participants will not wear self-contained breathing apparatus for these events.

Blind Crawl The test administrator guides the participant to one end of a blind crawl tube, which the participant crawls through until the end. Participants unable to successfully complete the blind crawl will not be allowed to continue to the aerial climb or timed series of events.

Aerial Climb An aerial ladder is extended approximately 75 feet off the ground at an angle of 75 degrees. Participants are tethered to a safety line for fall protection and, upon instruction, ascend and descend the ladder without stopping. Participants are given five minutes to complete this exercise to allow adequate time to ascend and descend the ladder at a safe pace and to ensure they do not stop for an extended period of time. If it becomes evident the participant is not able to complete this event after five minutes, or takes breaks in excess of ten seconds, the participant will be considered to have failed this event. No time will be recorded unless the participant fails. After successful completion of this event, the candidate proceeds to the timed sequence of events.

TIMED EVENTS:

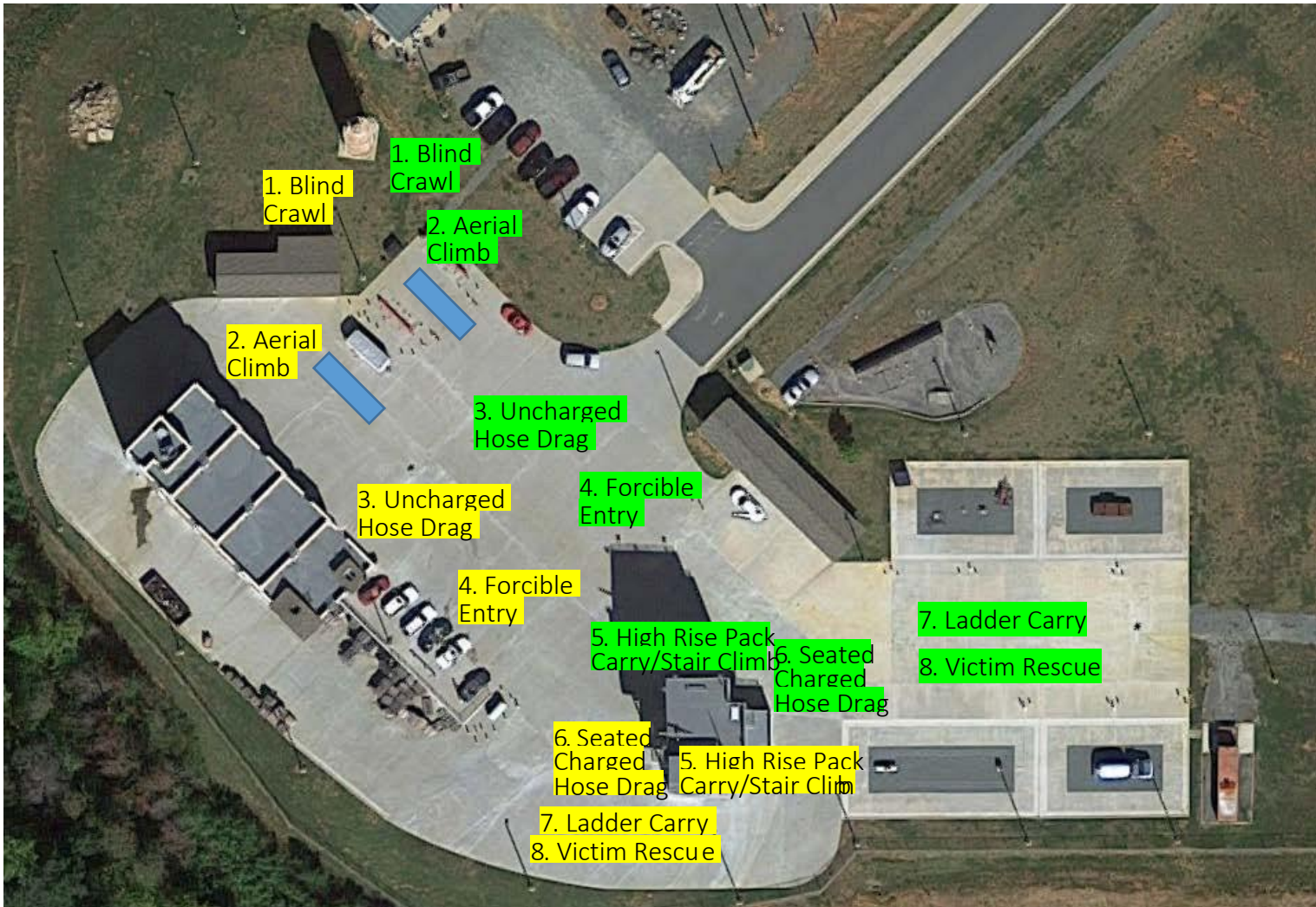
Note: Page 5 contains a sample map illustrating the entire test sequence. Two courses are set up. Each event listed below corresponds to a particular point on the map.

- Uncharged Hose Drag** Participants begin with one end of a 100-foot section of 1¾-inch hose over their shoulder and drag it 100 feet after instructed to “GO.”
- Forcible Entry** Participants will use a nine-pound dead blow sledgehammer to perform a forcible entry/ventilation simulation by driving a 151-pound I-beam on a Keiser Force Machine a distance of five feet.
- Stair Climb / High Rise Pack Carry** The high-rise pack includes 50 feet of 1¾ inch hose, with wye & nozzle, and is located at the bottom of a flight of stairs. Participants carry the high rise pack up to the 4th floor, and then bring the pack down to the original location.
- Seated / Kneeling Charged Hose Drag** Participants will sit down or kneel and drag a charged 1¾ inch hose line for a distance of 25 feet.
- Ladder Carry** Participants will carry a 16-foot roof ladder a distance of 100 feet and place it on the ground.
- Victim Rescue** Participants will walk to an approximately 165-pound mannequin, safely get their arms under the arms of the mannequin and lift it, and then drag the mannequin 100 feet until all parts of it cross a finish line.

CRITERIA FOR PASSING THE EXAM

Both entry-level and incumbent participants must successfully complete both the Aerial Climb and Blind Crawl as individual events, and then complete all timed events in 7 minutes and 10 seconds or less. Once a candidate starts on the timed portion of the course, the clock does not stop.

Winston-Salem Fire Department Firefighter Physical Ability Course Layout



Note: Map not drawn to scale