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I. Purpose:

A. Prince George Fire and Emergency Services (PGFEMS) acknowledges the integral role of physical fitness in both ensuring the community's needs are addressed efficiently and in safeguarding the well-being of our team. Maintaining peak physical health not only aids in the personal health and longevity of our members but also drastically reduces the risk of injuries or unfortunate fatalities during duty. Data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) between 2007 and 2017 indicates that 43% of firefighters' Line-of-Duty Deaths (LODD) resulted from cardiac events. Furthermore, the NFPA highlighted that 52.7% of significant injuries at fire scenes and 58.0% of injuries at fire scenes can be attributed to strains, sprains, and muscular pain. Physical fitness plays a pivotal role in mitigating such prevalent challenges. Moreover, as our members face injuries, illnesses, or extended leaves, the commitment to physical well-being also becomes crucial in facilitating a smooth and effective return to duty. By emphasizing consistent physical conditioning across our career and volunteer members equally, we aim to combat the most common causes of LODDs and injuries, ensuring our team's readiness and resilience.

II. Scope

- A. The Physical Fitness policy is established to support the health, safety, and well-being of all members within the Prince George Fire and EMS Department (PGFEMS). It underscores the importance of ensuring that volunteer members meet the same health and fitness standards currently required under Prince George County Policies as career firefighters, given that all personnel may be called to perform demanding duties at any time.
- B. This inclusive policy fosters a unified standard of fitness that benefits the entire team of PGFEMS. It integrates seamlessly with Prince George County's "Medical Examinations" policy to ensure consistency and coherence for all members.
- C. In instances where this policy does not explicitly address an issue, Career members are directed to adhere to the established policies of Prince George County.



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III. Policy

A. General Health and Physical Fitness:

- i. All PGFEMS members shall be in physical condition sufficient to enable them to adequately perform Fire and Emergency Services duties. It is recommended that all members evaluate their physical fitness according to the basic physical skills of a PGFEMS member. It is in each PGFEMS members best interest to maintain a level of physical fitness sufficient to:
 1. Enable him/her to perform all requirements for Fire and EMS duties.
 2. Reduce the effects of job-related stress.
 3. Promote cardiovascular fitness.
- ii. All PGFEMS career members upon entrance to the department will undergo a physical fitness evaluation as per the PGFEMS recruit book.
- iii. All PGFEMS members are encouraged to use the “workout” facilities located at the Central Wellness Center or at PGFEMS stations to maintain good physical health.

B. Skill Proficiency Evaluations:

- i. Skill evaluations are suggested to be conducted on an annual basis to uphold and ensure high standards of operational readiness and proficiency. The responsibility to initiate and oversee these evaluations rests with the respective station Officers, who will determine the appropriate timing and frequency in line with departmental needs and standards. This process is essential in assessing the proficiency of firefighters in an array of critical tasks and equipment management, thereby upholding alignment with departmental protocols and the stringent standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The forms used to measure the firefighter’s skill should consist of using the Virginia Department of Fire Programs Firefighter one and two skills check off sheets. Once completed, the outcomes of these evaluations shall be submitted to the PGFEMS Administration Office.
 1. Basic Firefighting Activities (Aligned with NFPA 1001: Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications):
 - a. Hose Management
 - b. Ladder Procedures



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c. Fire Quenching Methods

2. Advanced Firefighting Activities (In line with NFPA 472: Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents):
 - a. Handling Hazardous Materials
 - b. Search and Rescue Missions
 - c. Vehicle Rescue Techniques
 - d. Equipment Proficiency (Conforming to NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program):
 - e. Usage of and appropriately demonstrated use of Personal Protective Gear.
 - f. Operation of Breathing Equipment
 - g. Mastery of Hydraulic Instruments

3. PGFEMS Physical Agility Course:

All Prince George County Fire and Emergency Medical Services (PGFEMS) members must complete an initial physical agility assessment upon joining the department. This assessment, conducted by the PGFEMS Training Division/Administration team, evaluates essential skills through a designated agility course. The course encompasses a series of tasks that must be completed within a maximum time frame of eight (8) minutes.

- a. *Large Diameter Hose Extension (LHD Extension)*
 - i. Candidate must be able to extend the 100' section of 5" hose. Candidates will start at the designated starting position and will end at the designated finishing line. This station is designed to show that the candidate can successfully deploy and move a 5" Supply line.
- b. Hydrant Operation:
 - i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the capabilities of operating a hydrant by removing the hydrant steamer cap replacing the steamer cap,



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ensuring that it is securely in place, using the hydrant wrench. Candidate will then open the hydrant completely, and then close the hydrant completely.

c. Charged Hose Extension:

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the capabilities of advancing a charged 1-3/4" hand line by grasping at the nozzle end and advancing the charged hand line from the designated start point until the hose is fully extended and tight at the designated ending point.

d. High-rise pack:

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the capabilities of moving a bundled 1 3/4 high-rise pack by either dragging or picking up in any fashion the bundled high-rise pack at the designated start point and walking at least 100' to a designated right or left had turn continuing an additional 50' and placing the high-rise pack in the designated ending point. Both the candidate and the entire hose bundle must cross the finish line.

e. Forcible Entry:

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the capabilities of physically utilizing a sledgehammer and tire to simulate using forcible entry tools. Candidate will swing the sledgehammer striking the tire 20 times with full over the head swings, candidate must remain standing during the swings.

f. Tool Carry:

- i. The candidate must be able to demonstrate the physical ability to carry fire ground tools, by picking up both saws one in each hand securely, then carrying the tools without dropping them to the designated finish line approximately 50'.



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g. Ladder Raise:

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the physical ability to safely extend a fixed ladder to its furthest extension and return it to its lowest locked position. Candidate will demonstrate using the hand over hand method a controlled raise and lower of the extension ladder without allowing the halyard to slide through their hands at any point.

h. Victim Removal:

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate the physical ability to remove a patient from a building utilize of a victim carry or drag. Candidates must drag the manikin a total of 50' from the designated start line down 25' the back 25' to the designated finish line. The candidate must always maintain full control of the manikin. The candidate and the manikin must cross the designated finish line before time is stopped.

i. Face-mask Toleration (Untimed event):

- i. Candidate must be able to demonstrate ability to wear and move in an SCBA mask. Candidate shall be placed in an appropriately sized SCBA mask and placed in a hallway and asked to walk/crawl the duration of the hallway without removing the mask until returning back to the starting location.

IV. PGFEMS Volunteer Pre-Membership NFPA 1582 or related Physical Examinations

- A. Every PGFEMS Volunteer or career applicant, upon acceptance of membership with PGFEMS will undergo a comprehensive NFPA 1582 personal physical examination and testing for illegal substances conducted by a PGFEMS designated healthcare professional before starting their role as a PGFEMS volunteer or career member. These tests and physicals will be free to the member



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and are covered by the County. The examination will generally encompass but is not limited to NFPA 1582 standards such as the following:

- i. Blood pressure screening
 - ii. Vision and hearing tests
 - iii. Range of limb and joint motion test
 - iv. Assessment of height/weight relationship
 - v. Pulmonary function
 - vi. Drug screen test
- B. Those found physically unfit will not be eligible to join the PGFEMS team. PGFEMS Career members shall follow this policy section as well as County Policy. This policy adheres strictly to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- C. Fire Administration: The PGFEMS Administration Office is entrusted with the application process. This involves assuring application completion, obtaining signed waivers, performing background checks, and liaising with appropriate agencies and medical providers. The entire process, from application receipt to physical examination completion, is streamlined to maintain transparency, efficiency, and compliance.
- D. Individual Responsibilities: Applicants have distinct responsibilities, from ensuring the accuracy of their application forms to complying with the PGFEMS process for membership/employment. Post-acceptance, new members must finalize their physical information forms, coordinate with the designated medical provider for their physicals, and manage any medical follow-ups independently, ensuring they adhere to stipulated timelines.
- E. In-Service Examinations: Any PGFEMS member, at any time during his/her period of membership or employment, may be required to undergo examinations to determine his/her physical and mental fitness to perform his/her job, including tests for illegal substances. Such periodic examinations shall be at the expense of the County, except as noted below.
- i. The PGFEMS member determined to be physically or mentally unfit to continue in his/her designated position may be demoted, transferred, or separated from PGFEMS volunteer service or employment.
 - ii. When a PGFEMS member of the County is reported by the examining physician or psychologist to be physically or mentally unfit to perform work in the position which he/she is a volunteer or employed, such



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member volunteer may, within five (5) days from the date of his/her notification of such determination by the examining physician, indicate in writing to the Chief of PGFEMS his/her intention to submit the question of his/her physical or mental unfitness to a physician or psychologist of his/her own choice. In the event there is a difference of opinion between the original examining professional and the professional chosen by the volunteer, then the County Administrator shall designate a third professional, whose decision shall be final and binding as to the physical and mental fitness of such PGFEMS member to perform the work of the position of a PGFEMS member. The County shall bear the expense of reasonable direct costs of the first and third examinations, with the volunteer member bearing the expense of the second examination.

- iii. The County shall not be responsible for any expenses related to these appointments other than professional fees and directly related laboratory work.
- iv. The Fire Chief of PGFEMS reserves the right to mandate a health exam at no cost to the volunteer member under special circumstances, especially when there's a decline in a volunteer's performance or during critical incidents. Career members will also fall under this category and county policy.

V. Annual Medical Physicals

- A. This section outlines the requirements and procedures for annual firefighter medical examinations per the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1500/1582 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program. These examinations aim to ensure the health and fitness of all our PGFEMS members, promote overall wellness, and maintain the highest level of safety and operational readiness within the Prince George Fire and EMS Department.
- B. All members of the PGFEMS Department are required to complete a yearly medical examination adhering to the NFPA 1500/1582 or other related standard, scheduled on the anniversary of their start date with the department. These examinations will be carried out by a licensed healthcare provider specializing in occupational medicine who is well-versed in the unique physical demands and



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responsibilities of firefighting and is contracted by PGFEMS. It is the responsibility of each member to coordinate with the Fire Administration Office to arrange their medical appointment for the corresponding anniversary date.

- C. PGFEMS Fire Administration will maintain a list of approved healthcare providers who meet the requirements outlined in this policy. Firefighters shall schedule their annual medical examination with an approved provider at a mutually agreed-upon time through Fire Administration.
- D. All medical examination results will be treated as confidential and securely maintained in accordance with applicable privacy laws and regulations. Access to these records will be restricted to authorized personnel only. The healthcare provider conducting the medical examination will determine if a PGFEMS member meets the medical requirements for firefighting duties based on the NFPA 1582 Standard. If a member is found to have medical conditions that may affect their ability to perform firefighting duties safely and effectively, the provider will recommend further evaluations as necessary.
- E. If a PGFEMS member cannot meet the medical requirements for performing firefighting duties, the Prince George County Fire Chief and leadership will work closely with the affected member to determine an appropriate course of action.
- F. The Prince George Fire and EMS Department is committed to providing the necessary resources and support to ensure all members can participate in the annual NFPA 1500/1582 medical examination process. This includes covering the examination costs and providing administrative support for scheduling and record-keeping.
- G. Should any member of the PGFEMS Department fail to undergo their mandatory medical examination within 30 days following their anniversary date, may result in the member being placed on administrative leave until they receive clearance from their physical examination.



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VI. On-Duty Accident or Illness with Extended Absence

- A. Should a PGFEMS volunteer member, in the course of their duties, suffer an accident or illness, causing the member to be unable to respond to calls for service more for more than 30-days, PGFEMS Administration may require, at the County's expense, a physical examination to determine the members fitness and ability to return to function as a PGFEMS volunteer. Should the physician determine that the volunteer member is fit to return to his/her duties as a PFEMS firefighter, the member must provide the physician medical release for firefighter duty to the station Chief and Fire Administration before returning to duty. Should the member disagree with the findings of the County physician, the member may submit the question of physical fitness to a physician of his/her own choice.
- B. In the event that there is a difference of opinions between the original examining professional and the professional chosen by the volunteer member, the County Administrator shall designate a third professional, whose decision shall be final and binding as to the physical fitness of the PGFEMS member to perform the work of the position. The County shall bear the expense of reasonable direct costs of the first and third examinations, with the volunteer member bearing the expense of the second examination. The County shall not be responsible for any expenses related to these appointments other than professional fees and directly related laboratory work. Career members will also fall under this category and county policy.

VII. Injury/Illness While Performing Duties as a Volunteer for PGFEMS

- A. All PGFEMS career members shall follow the policy as outlined by the Prince George County Human Resources County Policies.
- B. As a volunteer with the Prince George County Fire & Emergency Services (PGFEMS), your well-being is a priority. Should an injury or illness occur due to your serving PGFEMS, it's essential to follow these procedures to ensure that you receive the support and benefits.
- C. Immediate Steps After an Incident:



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- i. **Notify The Battalion Chief on Duty immediately:** As soon as an incident occurs, it is critical to inform the Battalion Chief on duty, who will then contact the Fire Administration at once. Prompt action is crucial to activate your coverage and facilitate swift assistance. The PGFEMS Battalion Chief or Fire Administration will then ensure that the volunteer station officer is alerted. Immediate notification streamlines the process, helping you to secure the necessary support promptly. All injuries while in the performance of PGFEMS duty are subject to drug and alcohol testes and PGFEMS intoxicant policy.
- ii. **Completing the Necessary Paperwork:** The PGFEMS Fire Administration will work with the volunteer station officer to locate the VFIS Accident/Sickness Claim Report, which should be readily available at your station. The Station officer will ensure the volunteer carefully completes the first three sections of the report with accurate details of the incident and your personal information. An authorized PGFEMS official, typically the Station Chief or their appointee, must complete the final section of the report to validate the claim.
- iii. **Submit the Report:** Once the report is completed and certified, submit it to the Fire Administration immediately. This ensures that your claim is registered with the insurance provider promptly.
- iv. **If Medical Care is Needed:** Should the injury or illness require a doctor's visit, the volunteer must have the physician fill out the "Attending Physician's Statement." This statement is a critical part of the claim. It can be handed to the volunteer, or they can pass it on to the Fire Administration Office, or the volunteer's physician can send it directly to them.
- v. **Follow-Up/Acknowledgment of Claim:** After the claim is submitted, Glatfelter Claims Management or current insurer will send a confirmation to the volunteer member, the Fire Administration office, and the County Board of Supervisors. This acknowledgment is proof the member's claim is being processed.
- vi. **Managing Medical Bills:** Any medical bills the member receives connected to the injury shall be forwarded to the Fire Administration



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office. They are the liaison with the insurance carrier and will ensure that the members' bills are submitted for payment.

- vii. **Why Timely Reporting Matters:** Even if the injury seems minor, report it. This is important because some injuries might not show full effect immediately. If the injury worsens later, having the claim in the system makes it easier to receive timely medical care and compensation.
- viii. **Documentation:** The volunteer members should keep all their medical documents, receipts, and related paperwork organized. The member must submit them to the Fire Administration office as they receive them. This helps keep the members' claim up-to-date and ensures that they are reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses.
- ix. **Ongoing Communication:** Regular updates on your condition or treatment progress are essential. This helps the Fire Administration to manage your file accurately and advocate on your behalf with the insurance provider.
- x. **Record Keeping:** The Fire Administration will maintain a detailed file with all volunteer members' medical information and the history of payments for their treatment. They will be the custodians of all volunteer members' records, ensuring everything is in order for the duration of their recovery and beyond.

VIII. **Return-to-Active Volunteer Duty:**

- A. PGFEMS enforces a stringent Return-to- Work/volunteer duty policy, complying with the standards specified by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1582, Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments and recommendations from the Prince George County workers compensation provider for volunteer members.
- B. PGFEMS Return-to-Work/Volunteer duty applies to all PGFEMS volunteer members who have been absent from work due to injury, illness, or medical condition, irrespective of whether it's volunteer or work-related. All career



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members are subject to more comprehensive rules as outlined in Prince George County HR Policy.

IX. Initial Medical Evaluation and Physical Condition:

- A. Upon any PGFEMS member's readiness to return to duty, members must provide a return to duty authorization from their treating physician and may be required to undergo an initial medical evaluation according to NFPA 1582 standards conducted by a PGFEMS contracted provider. Conditions requiring this medical evaluation include but are not limited to the following:
- i. Cardiovascular Incidents (Chapter 6 of NFPA 1582): Conditions like heart attacks, angina, or other cardiovascular diseases that have the potential to impair cardiac function during high-stress activities.
 - ii. Cerebrovascular Events (Chapter 6 of NFPA 1582): Incidents such as strokes or transient ischemic attacks that may affect motor functions, cognition, and other neurological systems.
 - iii. Major Orthopedic Injuries: Injuries like bone fractures, severe ligament tears, or dislocations that could influence movement, weight-bearing, and physical agility.
 - iv. Systemic Illnesses with Significant Physical Impairment: Diagnosed conditions like uncontrolled diabetes, which results in complications such as neuropathy, nephropathy, or retinopathy.
 - v. Notable Changes in Chronic Medical Conditions: Such as a significant worsening of asthma, diabetes, or hypertension that might require additional interventions or adjustments to work conditions.
 - vi. Mental Health Crises (Chapter 10 of NFPA 1582): Conditions like severe depression, anxiety, PTSD, or other disorders that can significantly impact decision-making, stress handling, and interpersonal interactions.
 - vii. Recovery from Major Surgical Procedures: Surgeries including joint replacements, significant cardiac surgeries, hernia repairs, or organ transplants necessitating extended recuperation.
 - viii. Hospitalization: Any condition requiring hospitalization of more than 14 consecutive days, which may lead to reduced physical or cognitive capacities.



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- ix.* Vision Impairments and Hearing Loss (Chapter 5 of NFPA 1582): Issues such as macular degeneration, uncorrected vision problems, or significant hearing loss, which is not mitigated by devices compatible with IDLH environments.
- x.* Respiratory Conditions (Chapter 6 of NFPA 1582): Diseases like COPD, asthma with frequent exacerbations, or other significant pulmonary diseases affecting respiratory endurance.
- xi.* Digestive Disorders (Chapter 7 of NFPA 1582): Conditions like Crohn's disease or significant liver disorders. It should be noted that many digestive disorders, when managed effectively by a medical doctor, may not necessitate an NFPA 1582 evaluation.
- xii.* Hematologic Disorders (Chapter 8 of NFPA 1582): Blood conditions such as anemia, clotting disorders, or blood cancers affecting health and stamina.
- xiii.* Genitourinary Disorders (Chapter 9 of NFPA 1582): Diseases such as significant kidney disorders or recurring kidney stones. Many genitourinary conditions, when under control, might not need an extensive evaluation.
- xiv.* Skin Disorders (Chapter 12 of NFPA 1582): Conditions that can affect the skin's barrier function and sensitivity, like chronic eczema or severe burns.
- xv.* Medications and Treatments (Chapter 14 of NFPA 1582): Use of regular medications or treatments that may influence physical stamina, cognition, or risk of injury.
- xvi.* Miscellaneous Conditions and Disorders (Chapter 15 of NFPA 1582): Issues like severe allergies, morbid obesity, or any other condition possibly affecting safety and performance on duty.
- xvii.* Tumors and Cancers: Active malignancies or undergoing recent treatments that can influence stamina, immune function, and overall physical capacity.

B. The requirement for an NFPA 1582 evaluation hinges on the treating physician's or healthcare provider's recommendation, the nature of the medical condition or injury, and the specific physical and mental demands of the member's duties at PGFEMS. This ensures that comprehensive evaluations are conducted as necessary, confirming a member's ability to fulfill their responsibilities safely and efficiently and that all members are evaluated the same.



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- C. *Regular Check-Ins:* Scheduled check-ins may be required to assist in monitoring the returning member's health status, address any issues, and revise the Return-to-Duty plan as needed. These sessions will engage healthcare professionals, supervisors, and mental health specialists if needed.
- D. *Documentation and Record Keeping:* The Return-to-Work/Volunteer duty process necessitates thorough documentation at each step—from the initial medical evaluation to the granting of final clearance. These records strictly adhere to confidentiality standards in line with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and other applicable privacy laws. Furthermore, all documentation pertaining to the physical fitness of PGFEMS members is securely managed and stored by the PGFEMS Administration, ensuring compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards and state regulations.
- E. *Compliance:* Full compliance with every aspect of this policy is mandatory. Failure to comply may affect a member's status. Any concerns regarding the policy or compliance should be communicated to department leadership or the appointed Health and Safety Officer.
- X. Return-to-Active-Duty Career Members:**
- A. All PGFEMS career members shall follow this, and the additional requirements listed in the return-to-work policy as outlined by the Prince George County Human Resources County Policies.