

Physical Ability Test Orientation Guide



Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Services

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Physical Ability Test Candidate Orientation Guide

This manual has been developed to introduce you to the Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Services (DACFES) Physical Ability Test (PAT). The test consists of a series of tasks designed to assess important physical abilities necessary for effective job performance as a firefighter. These tasks were developed to mirror real situations that firefighters encounter on the job. These tasks represent basic skills that do not require training or previous experience as a firefighter to successfully complete.

The selection process for firefighters is very competitive. Although you are not required to read or use this orientation and preparation guide, we encourage you to do so. The more prepared you are, the more likely you are to pass the test.

The PAT is divided into two parts. There is an untimed portion of the test during which you will be required to ascend and descend a 35-foot extension ladder. This portion of the test is strictly pass/fail. There is also a timed portion of the test during which you will complete a series of nine job simulation components. These components are timed in a continuous series and must be completed in the allotted time in order to pass the PAT. Following is an overview of the components/stations of the PAT:

- Charged line advance
- Hoseline feed
- Victim rescue (dummy drag)
- Equipment carry
- Ceiling breach and pull
- Agility crawl
- Ladder raise
- Hydrant opening
- Stair climb with equipment

The following points should help to familiarize you with what will take place on the day of the test.

- Applicants are strongly encouraged to wear athletic shoes (sneakers) and appropriate clothing for physically demanding work. You will be performing physical acts that demonstrate strength, agility, and endurance, and it is important to be outfitted in attire that does not hinder your performance. It is likely that you will get both wet and dirty. Applicants should also consider wearing long pants to cover and protect the knees. You will be allowed to use kneepads as you will be crawling on your hands and knees during certain parts of the PAT. If you wish to wear kneepads, you must provide them yourself.
- You will be required to wear a helmet during the PAT. This helmet will be provided for you. You will also be provided gloves to protect your hands. You may bring your own gloves if you wish. Gloves must allow for unrestricted use of the hands and fingers as you will be required to perform tasks that require finger and hand dexterity and control. The testing authority reserves the right to inspect all personal equipment, and to disallow equipment to ensure that its use does not affect the fair and impartial administration of the PAT.

- Applicants must wear a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), excluding the face piece, regulator and hose, for the timed portion of the PAT. The SCBA weighs approximately 30 pounds.
- **You must not run during the test.** Running is not permitted on a working fireground, and it will not be allowed during this test. Failure to heed a first warning not to run will result in disqualification. Running is defined as any time both feet are off the ground at the same time while you are advancing on the course. You may move as fast as you like, while remaining safe, on the charged line advance, victim rescue and stair climb stations as it is not considered technically possible to run during these components.
- Test monitors will be assigned to time you while on the course. It is acceptable to ask the test monitor questions concerning course rules and layout prior to beginning the course and while on the course.
- You will be allowed as much time as needed to complete each individual component of the PAT within the maximum allotted time. Should you perform one of the components incorrectly, the test monitor will guide you as to how to correct your actions or to perform the component again. Pay careful attention to the instruction of the test monitor and ask for clarification when needed.
- You are allowed to rest at any time during the PAT. If you need to rest, simply cease forward movement on the PAT course and sit or stand until you are ready to begin again. There are transitions between each of the timed PAT components that will allow for brief, unstructured rest period as well.
- Unnecessarily dropping, throwing or other **intentional misuse** of any of the testing props will be grounds for disqualification. If a candidate is observed by any of the test administrators misusing the test props, the candidate will be immediately escorted from the test site and be charged with failure to complete the PAT.
- **All nine timed components of the PAT will be timed in a series – there are no individual timed events. The test has a cutoff time and failure to complete the course in the allotted time will result in disqualification.**

It is the expectation of the Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Services that this orientation guide will provide you with sufficient information to prepare for and succeed in the PAT. The nine events that compose the PAT are outlined for you on the following pages, along with suggestions for preparing for each event.

Please note that suggestions regarding preparation activities are simply suggestions intended to offer the candidate a means of practicing for the PAT. These are only suggestions. Neither Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Services nor the PAT developer can be held responsible for injuries or expenses incurred during preparation for the PAT.

Doña Ana County Fire and Emergency Services does not endorse any private schools or services offering preparation for this physical ability test and is not responsible for their advertising claims.

Ladder Climb (35 feet)

Station Description:

You will be required to climb a 35-foot extension ladder. The ladder will be positioned on the building at a comfortable climbing angle. You will be outfitted with a safety harness and will be belayed by firefighters to further ensure your safety. You will only be allowed two attempts to complete this component. This component is NOT TIMED but must be completed to pass the PAT.

Preparation:

To prepare for this event you may want to practice climbing a sturdy ladder to the roof of a typical two-story house. Practice carefully and slowly climbing up and down the ladder. This event is not timed so do not rush. If you choose to do this, take every safety precaution necessary to avoid injury.

Charged Line Advance

Station Description:

You will be required to pull/drag a charged hoseline for a distance of 100 feet. You will be placed behind the start line and your proctor will notify you when you may begin the test. The proctor will explain to you that you cannot grab the hose past the taped section that is marked on the hose. The timer will start when any part of your body or the hose crosses the start line. You will advance the hoseline across a finish line that is 100 feet away. You will complete this component once your entire body and any part of the hose cross the finish line.

You may pull/drag the hoseline in any manner that is comfortable for you (e.g., facing forward, facing backward, etc.); however, you may only take hold of the hoseline in the area that is marked on the hose.

You may move as quickly as you wish on this component.

Preparation:

This station requires leg strength and overall cardiovascular endurance. You can prepare for this event by dragging a weighted object across the ground using a rope.

Charged Line Advance Starting Position Example



Charged Line Advance Demonstration



Hoseline Feed

Station Description:

You will take a kneeling or sitting position in a four-foot by four-foot square marked on the ground. You must remain completely within this square during this component. You must also remain in a sitting or kneeling position during the entire component (e.g., one knee and one foot down, both knees down, seated position, etc.). You must 'reel-in' a charged hoseline that is fed around a 50-gallon drum. You will grasp that hoseline and pull it past the 50-gallon drum until the yellow taped line on the hoseline crosses it. This will indicate that you have pulled the hoseline for 25 feet.

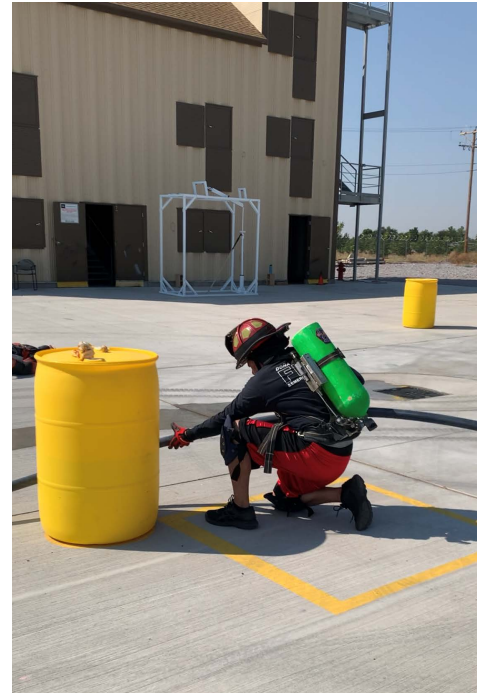
Preparation:

This station requires upper body strength, grip strength and muscular endurance. You can prepare for this station by reeling in rope connected to a heavy object that slides across the ground.

Hoseline Feed Starting Position Example



Demonstration of the Hoseline Feed



25 foot hose marker



Victim Rescue (Dummy Drag)

Station Description:

You will drag a human form dummy weighing approximately 170 pounds for a distance of 50 feet. You will drag the dummy either by grabbing onto the coat collar or by positioning your arms underneath the arms of the dummy. The recommended method for dragging the dummy is by the jacket collar or holding under the arms and around the chest. It will be unacceptable to drag the dummy by the head. You will drag the dummy for 25 feet, around a barrel, and then back across the finish line. In order to complete this station, both you and the dummy must completely cross the finish line.

Preparation:

This event requires lower body strength, upper body strength and endurance. You may prepare for this event by dragging a weighted object backwards in the same fashion you would drag the dummy.

Victim Rescue Starting Position Example



Victim Rescue Demonstration



Equipment Carry

Station Description:

You will carry a prop that mimics the size and shape of a hydraulic spreader tool. The weight of the prop is approximately 75 pounds – a weight similar to a hydraulic power unit that a firefighter is expected to be able to carry by him/herself. You will carry this prop for a total distance of 50 feet. You must carry the prop with two hands. The prop will be positioned on a table and must be returned to a table to successfully complete the event.

Preparation:

This station requires core body strength, upper body strength, grip strength and overall cardiovascular endurance. You may prepare for this event by carrying a 75 pound object for a distance of 50 feet.

Demonstration of the Equipment Carry



Ceiling Breach and Pull

Station Description:

You will demonstrate the physical abilities needed to breach and pull ceiling with a pike pole during overhaul procedures by performing breach and pull motions using a ceiling simulator. You will position a pike pole in the target 'triangle' on the breach portion of the simulator and perform 4 breach repetitions. It is strongly suggested that you do keep your pole positioned in this triangle area and try not to let the pole slip out of this target area. You will then hook the pike pole onto the pull portion of the simulator and perform 4 pull repetitions. This sequence will be repeated for 4 total cycles.

You may grip the pike pole in any manner that is comfortable as long as both hands remain on the pike pole at all times. During this event, you must remain inside the 'box' that is created by the simulator. While your feet are allowed to touch or be on top of the metal foundation of the 'box', your feet may not go outside of the 'box'.

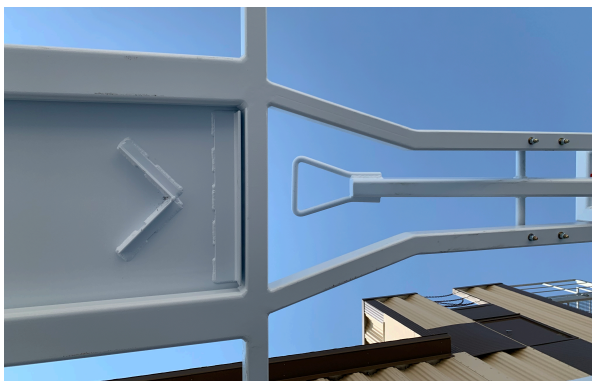
This station involves a highly specific simulator. A walkthrough will be completed prior to you taking this test, please be sure to ask questions about how this simulator works. It is recommended that you pay careful attention to how this simulator works prior to beginning the test.

The breach side of the simulator requires you to push up a hatch door offering 60 pounds of resistance. The pull side of the simulator requires that you hook onto a metal ring a pull down with a force of 80 pounds. You will be required to push the breach-side hatch door completely up and then bring it back down completely to complete a repetition. You will be required to fully pull down and return the pull-side of the simulator to complete a repetition. In all cases, the machine will make a distinctive 'slamming' noise that indicates that you have fully breached/pulled and successfully returned the machine to the resting position. The proctor will count out your repetitions and provide instruction to ensure that you perform acceptably during this component.

Preparation:

This event requires upper body strength and grip strength. The easiest way to prepare for this exercise will be to use a universal weight machine. The military press exercise that is typically performed using a universal weight machine will allow you to practice pressing weight upward above your head using your arms. Do keep in mind that during this component you may be able to use your legs and lower body to assist in pushing up on the breach side of the simulator. The 'lat' pull down exercise typically incorporated into a universal weight machine will closely simulate the pull side of the simulator if you use a closed grip.

"Breach" area



"Pull down" tab



Breach and Pull Component



"Breach" Demonstration



"Pull" Demonstration

Agility Crawl

Station Description:

You will crawl for approximately 50 feet along a marked yellow painted path inside a building. You must keep one hand on either side of the yellow line at all times. The path will require you to make a series of right and left hand turns. There are no obstacles in the path. The building is not lit, but ambient light will allow for visibility. You will get on your hands and knees prior to crossing the threshold to enter into the building. You must remain on your hands and knees throughout the entire path. The station is completed once your hands cross the door threshold to exit the building.

Preparation:

This event requires that you be able to demonstrate agility. You may prepare for this exercise by practicing crawling low to the ground. Remember, you will be wearing an SCBA that could decrease your flexibility.



Agility Crawl Starting Line

Starting Position Example

Agility Crawl Demonstration

Agility Crawl Finish Line



Ladder Raise

Station Description:

You will raise the fly section of a 24-foot extension ladder using the halyard. The ladder must be raised completely to the point at which it locks-out. The proctor will verify that the ladder has been raised sufficiently and will instruct you to lower the ladder at that time. During this component your feet must remain within the area defined by the markings on the ground. You must raise and lower the ladder with control. If the halyard slips through your hand at any time, you will be required to lower the ladder to the ground and perform the event again.

Preparation:

To simulate the ladder raise exercise, you can tie a rope securely to a weighted bag and place the rope over a sturdy horizontal bar that is at least eight to ten feet above the ground. Then you can use the same movements as you would in the ladder raise to bring the weight to the top of the bar and slowly lower it back to the ground.

Ladder Raise Test Area and Demonstration



Hydrant Opening

Station Description:

You will be required to rotate a hydrant wrench six times around the hydrant to simulate the task of opening the hydrant valve. You will stand in an area around the hydrant that allows for 270 degrees of range of motion. An area of 90 degree around the hydrant will be blacked-out. You are not allowed to set foot in this area during this component. You must rotate the hydrant wrench counter-clockwise around the top of the hydrant six times. The hydrant is set to 60 pounds of resistance. Once the sixth revolution has been completed, the proctor will instruct you to move on to the next component.

Preparation:

This event is very similar to the action involved in using a tire iron to loosen and tighten lug nuts on a car wheel. The main difference is that the resistance you experience during this event will be consistent throughout the five revolutions.



Hydrant Opening, Painted triangle- No stepping in this area

Hydrant Opening Demonstration



Stair Climb

Station Description:

You will climb an outdoor staircase up 3 flights of stairs to the top platform and back down to ground level. You will ascend and descend the staircase one time. You will be carrying a hose pack weighing 40 pounds during this event. The hose pack will be draped across the SCBA on your back.

This exercise directly simulates climbing up and back down three flights of stairs (from first floor to fourth floor) in an average building.

As you approach the stair climb, the proctor will stop you briefly in front of the stair case. You are to place your hands on the stair railings, at which time the proctor will drape the hose pack across your SCBA. The proctor will then indicate to you that you may climb the stairs. You may carry the hose pack in any manner that is comfortable. You must carry the hose pack at all times. You must not drag the hose pack at any time.

You must climb up and down hitting each stair along the way. You may use the railings but are not required to do so. You must place both feet on the upper landing to complete the ascent and place both feet back on the ground to complete this station. You may move as quickly as you choose while remaining safe. Once you have completed this event, the proctor will remove the hose pack from your back.

Listen carefully to the proctor during this course of this event. If you miss a stair or fail to properly complete an ascent or descent, the proctor will instruct you as to how to correct your mistake.

Preparation:

This station requires muscular and cardiovascular endurance. You may practice for this station by ascending and descending flights of stairs while carrying approximately 70 pounds of weight (SCBA plus hose pack).



Scoring

The nine timed components of this PAT will be timed in series. Any candidate that completes the course in **6 minutes and 56 seconds** (6:56) or less will pass this stage of the selection process.