



NVFC Position on Firefighter Physicals

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) supports annual medical assessments for all firefighters. Firefighter health and safety is essential to the protection of citizens and property in our communities. Firefighting is a physically demanding occupation. Health-related injuries including heart attack, stroke and cancer are the leading causes of firefighter duty-related death.

It is important that firefighters have an annual medical assessment but many do not. In some cases firefighters may not have health insurance or even a personal physician to conduct or consult with regarding the results of the assessment. Additionally, it can be cost-prohibitive or administratively challenging for many departments to implement an assessment program. The following are options for departments to consider in developing a firefighter medical assessment program.

1.) Preventive care/wellness check

Preventive care/well check assessments are generally available at no charge through employer-provided health insurance, Medicare or Medicaid. Individual coverage purchased through health insurance exchanges typically includes a free annual preventive care/well visit. It is important to note that this type of assessment is not designed to assess the ability of a person to perform the job duties of a firefighter.

2.) Department of Transportation (DOT) assessment

A DOT medical assessment is designed to confirm that someone is healthy enough to safely perform the job of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver. A DOT assessment must be conducted by a licensed “medical examiner” listed on the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration National Registry](#). It is important to note that this type of assessment is not designed to assess the ability of a person to perform the job duties of a firefighter.

3.) Department-specific assessment

Many fire departments develop a medical assessment for their candidates and members that includes components of the NFPA 1582 assessment but is based on the specific job duties and expectations of the agency.

4.) NFPA 1582-compliant assessment

The NFPA 1582 standard presents descriptive requirements for a comprehensive occupational medical program for fire departments. Provisions are applicable to fire department candidates and members whose job descriptions are outlined in NFPA 1001, NFPA 1002, NFPA 1003, NFPA 1006, NFPA 1021, and NFPA 1051.