



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Fire and Aviation  
3833 S Development Ave  
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354  
<http://www.nifc.gov>



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To: State and Center Directors  
Attn: State Fire Management Officers

From: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Guidance for the Department of the Interior (DOI) Medical Standards Program (MSP)

**Program Area:** Wildland Fire Preparedness, Wildland Fire Safety

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides direction for BLM participation in the DOI MSP. This IM supersedes Fire and Aviation memorandum [IM-2020-011](#), and augments guidance found in the *2022 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, chapters 2 and 13.

**Administrative or Mission Related:** Mission

**Policy/Action:** All BLM employees (incumbents and applicants) who participate in arduous, moderate, or light duty wildland fire activities must meet the federal interagency wildland firefighter medical standards regardless of employment status and hiring authority, including emergency firefighters (Administratively Determined-AD/casual hires) and collateral duty firefighters. Medical clearance in accordance with DOI MSP is required prior to taking the Work Capacity Test (WCT), performing arduous duty wildland fire duties, or any agency sanctioned physical fitness training to prepare for these duties.

Arduous Duty Baseline Exam

Comprehensive Health Services' (CHS) baseline exam is used for new employees (regardless of hiring authority) and collateral duty employees who are carrying arduous duty qualifications if they did not previously complete a baseline exam. While the exam is not a condition of employment for collateral duty employees, it is a condition of performing arduous duty wildland fire work. Baseline exams will be requested through the CHS Client Assess System (CAS) by a supervisor or servicing human resource officer (SHRO) who has been granted access to CAS. Participants will be sent log-in information to the CHS Examinee Access System (EAS) and asked to complete a Health Screening Questionnaire (HSQ) before the exam. Detailed instructions can be found at the DOI MSP Website,

[https://www.nifc.gov/medical\\_standards/](https://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards/).

### Periodic Exam

Arduous duty firefighters must complete a physical exam every three years. A baseline exam will be completed the first year and periodic exams every three years thereafter. Periodic exams will need to be requested through the CHS CAS by a supervisor or SHRO who has been granted access to CAS. Participants will be sent information to complete via the CHS EAS on-line.

### Self-Certification

A self-certification of medical clearance will be completed annually between exams. This process will be initiated by the employee through the CHS EAS. Clearance certificates will be printed through EAS and used as verification of medical qualification at the WCT. A self-certification must precede the light, moderate or arduous WCT by no more than 45 days. If a self-certification needs to be updated to meet the 45-day requirement, the employee may go into EAS and request another self-certification exam.

Self-certification results are also viewable by supervisors and SHRO's in CAS. Supervisors may order employees to self-certify prior to the 12-month expiration of the last medical qualification to accommodate unit level alignment of recertification schedule (RT-130, medical qualification or work capacity testing).

### Moderate and Light Duty

The medical screening process for moderate and light duty qualifications consists of a HSQ which is centralized and automated through CHS. The moderate or light HSQ will need to be requested through the CHS CAS by a supervisor or SHRO who has been granted access to CAS. Participants will be sent log-in information to access and complete the HSQ via the CHS EAS on-line. If significant health issues are identified on the HSQ, CHS may ask the examinee for additional supporting information needed for medical clearance. The employee may need to visit his/her personal physician to obtain the recommended additional medical information and is responsible for any related costs. Once medically cleared, the employee will print the clearance certificate through EAS and use it as verification of medical qualification at the WCT. The certificate must be dated no more than 45 days prior to taking the WCT. Detailed instructions for CAS users can be found at the DOI MSP Website.

[https://www.nifc.gov/medical\\_standards](https://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards).

### Non-Qualification Process

If an individual receives a determination of "Not Qualified" they may submit further medical information to a Reviewing Medical Officer (RMO) for re-determination of medical clearance at any time by contacting DOI MSP customer service at 1-888-286-2521, or [wlfcsr@blm.gov](mailto:wlfcsr@blm.gov).

### Risk Mitigation/Waiver (RM/W) Process

The RM/W process is available for applicants not meeting one or more of the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Standards. Existing waivers or waivers with restrictions remain valid unless there is a change in medical condition. For detailed information on the DOI MSP and the RM/W process guidance, please visit [https://www.nifc.gov/medical\\_standards](https://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards).

State Medical Standards Program Leads (SMSPL) will be responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations on all proposed RM/W requests where the non-qualifying health condition is static and stable. When the RM/W request is for a non-qualifying health condition that is NOT static and stable the SMSPL will consult with the Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager (WFSPM) prior to sending the request to the Management Official. The WFSPM will also be responsible for second-level reviews during DOI medical review boards. There should be emphasis on ensuring non-qualifying conditions are static and stable prior to review. A static and stable determination may only be made by the contracted RMO. Contact the DOI MSP for any questions regarding this process.

An RMO review may also be requested through the DOI MSP if the fire management officer (FMO) or SHRO has concerns about a clinician's performance of the DOI MSP exam. All exams are subject to medical review by the DOI MSP, which could potentially change the examinee's clearance.

#### Medical Qualification Expiration Date and Periodicity

The DOI MSP three-year periodicity is based on the date of the actual physical exam. Annual self-certifications between periodic exams must be completed within 12-months of the previous medical qualification date and within 45 days prior to taking a light, moderate, or arduous WCT. If an employee's medical qualification expires prior to successfully clearing a periodic exam or self-certification they are no longer medically qualified. If an employee is on an emergency assignment on the date their WCT/refresher and/or medical qualification expires, they will complete their assignment including any extensions. Upon return to their duty station, they must complete the WCT/refresher and/or DOI MSP self-certification process and acquire a new Incident Qualification Card prior to accepting any new assignment.

#### Proof of Medical Qualification/Successful Health Screening for WCT

Medical qualification/clearance must be verified by the WCT Administrator prior to the WCT.

*Certificates of Medical Qualification/Clearance* for arduous, moderate, and light personnel are the ONLY forms that serve as verification of medical qualification. *Certificates of Medical Qualification/Clearance* can be printed by the firefighter through the EAS, or by a supervisor that has been granted access to CAS.

#### Alaska AD/Emergency Fire Fighter (EFF)

The BLM is implementing medical exams for BLM casual hires in Alaska. Exams are being delivered in village locations on select dates and may also be scheduled at various clinics in Alaska. Please visit the Alaska Fire Service website at: <https://afs.ak.blm.gov/eff.php> for more information on the process.

#### Tower Climbers

BLM tower climbers use CHS as their contractor for medical clearance. BLM tower climbers wishing to participate in light, moderate, or arduous WCTs must request a firefighter qualification determination through the BLM National Tower Climbing Coordinator. Once the firefighter qualification determination is complete the tower climber will print the *Certificate of Medical Qualification/Clearance* through EAS and use it as verification of medical qualification at the WCT. A qualification determination (or self-certification) date must precede the WCT by no more than 45 days. Questions regarding the tower climbing determination can be directed to Jason Becker, BLM National Tower Climbing Coordinator, 208-387-5840, [jbecker@blm.gov](mailto:jbecker@blm.gov).

#### Exam Payment

All CHS exams are centrally funded at the national level. Firefighters should not pay for or be billed for CHS exams.

Additional medical tests not required by the standard DOI MSP CHS medical exam are not authorized. If the examining clinician recommends further tests to determine firefighter medical clearance, the BLM may pay for these additional tests with prior approval by the Fire Management Officer (FMO) or SHRO. If the examining clinician recommends further medical information, the employee may need to visit his/her personal physician to obtain the additional medical information and is responsible for any related costs.

**Timeframe:** Effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** There is no direct financial impact to states/centers/units. Costs of exams are centrally funded at the national level.

**Background:** Medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 Code of Federal Regulation 39, provide consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health and safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demand. Agency administrators and supervisors are responsible for the occupational health and safety of their employees performing wildland fire activities and may require employees to take a medical examination at any time.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, chapters 2 and 13 will be updated during its normal revision cycle.

**Coordination:** This IM has been coordinated with the Fire and Aviation Directorate, Division of Fire Operations (FA-300), the Division of Support Services (FA-200), the Fire and Aviation Directorate Human Resources Officer (FA-220) and the Fire and Aviation Directorate Equal Employment Opportunity Manager (FA-120).

**Contact:** Specific exam questions should be routed to the DOI MSP customer service representatives, 1-888-286-2521, or [wlfcsr@blm.gov](mailto:wlfcsr@blm.gov).

Other program questions should be sent to Ted Mason, BLM Fire Safety Program Manager, 208-387-5434, [tmason@blm.gov](mailto:tmason@blm.gov) or Bodie Ronk, FA-200 Deputy Division Chief, 208-387-5044, [bronk@blm.gov](mailto:bronk@blm.gov).

Human resources or SHRO questions should be sent to Cindy Pogue, Fire and Aviation Human Resources Officer, 208-387-5523, or [cpogue@blm.gov](mailto:cpogue@blm.gov).

Signed by:  
Grant Beebe  
Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:  
Karen Jackson  
Records Administrator

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