



"SAFETY ZONE"

"A High Performing Firefighter is by Definition a Safe Firefighter"

Issue 3
November 2004

"FIRELINE FITNESS – Are you "Firefit" through the winter?"

With winter just around the corner, now is a good time to assess your current fitness level and plan to balance it with quality rest, fun-time activities, and a well thought out winter fitness maintenance program. Sticking to a focused ["Fireline Fitness"](#) exercise routine throughout the off-season will not only keep you fit year round, but it will also help "jumpstart" you more efficiently into "spring training" for the next fire season, especially at the ["arduous"](#) level.

No matter how busy you were in 2004, multiple assignments, miles of travel, and participation in high complexity incidents, often lead to various levels of personal stress including potential episodes of cumulative fatigue. Since the human body and mind must readjust from these stressors, it's vitally important that exercise play a role to complement rejuvenation - not only from fatigue but from any other repetitive impacts on your body. Never before has physical fitness played a more important role in the performance and effectiveness of the professional wildland firefighter. Gone are the days of quick preparation for the old "step test" - Soon wildland firefighters, especially those in the eastern and southern states will begin training for the ["Work Capacity Test."](#) This is all the more reason for considering a balanced off-season fireline fitness program!



A good self-assessment will help you answer the question: "How do I find the right balance between "hibernation" mode, recovery from "overuse" symptoms and injuries while staying fit during the off-season?" Selecting appropriate activities and exercise regimes NOW should help you return to work rejuvenated and ready to venture safely into the next round of firefighting.

Maintaining, ["Fit to Work"](#) (Dr. Sharkey's Book) performance capacity and long-term fitness are critical for dealing with future mental and physical fireline situations. Being proactive displays your individual and personal commitments to safety and wellness. What better time is there for achieving these goals? Remember - Strive for balance between exercise, stretching, injury recovery, and quality rest. Keep exercising and stretching - only do so with moderation and common sense.



[Fireline Fitness](#) programs should include a minimum of three days a week of cardiovascular (aerobic) exercise, muscular strength/endurance, and flexibility training. Cardiovascular training should include a variety of things that you enjoy - be creative! Continue to eat good balanced nutritious meals, get quality sleep, drink lots of water, and learn to manage stress effectively. Don't forget to enjoy your time away from the fireline.

So why wait? The time to begin your fitness program is **NOW!** Do yourself, your body, and your crew a favor by taking good care of yourself in the off-season. You'll be glad that you did!

(Before starting any exercise program, consult your physician)

-----Print version -----

"Newsletter of the Forest Service Fire Operations Safety Council"

<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/council/>

