

## PHYSICAL CAPACITY TESTING FOR PARAMEDICS

Paramedics provide pre-hospital emergency medical care to patients and transport them to hospital for further medical care. They usually work in pairs. The most physically demanding aspect of their job is the handling and lifting of patients. Some of the more demanding lifts are for heavy patients who may be unconscious or have unstable limbs or spine fractures and have to be handled carefully in tight quarters such as bathrooms, stair cases, doorways and accident scenes. Paramedics must be able to negotiate tight corners and steep staircases often in snow or ice while lifting heavy patients on a stretcher or lifting chair.

The physical requirements of this occupation are HEAVY (National Occupational Classification: Career Handbook; Human Resources Canada; 1996 Vol 1: 3234 Appendix A) and require very good back, shoulder, arm, grip and leg strength. Paramedics are expected to be able to handle clients of up to 250 lbs on a stretcher weighing 100 lbs. Inability to meet the physical demands of this job may have significant consequences to the health of the paramedic, his partner or the patient. Paramedics must have the stamina to perform continuous strenuous work such as CPR and carry patients up or down multiple flights of stairs.

In order to ensure that incumbents are capable of performing the essential duties of this occupation, a job related physical capacity test was developed based on an extensive evaluation of the job. This protocol was developed by Back In Motion Physiotherapy and the Sault and Area Ambulance Services. The minimal standards were approved by a team of management and union members who underwent the physical test and helped establish minimum standards.

Incumbents are expected to be able to successfully perform the following:

- Complete informed consent form and Par Q Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire
- Baseline physiological measurements: resting heart rate and blood pressure
- Visual Acuity, Hearing Screening Test
- Musculoskeletal Screening Test: Range of motion, sensory discrimination, power and joint stability testing.
- Aerobic capacity testing of treadmill to VERY HEAVY LEVEL (10 METS) 5 minutes within 85% age predicted heart rate maximum.
- Lifting tests:
  - Power Lift (floor to knuckle height) 150 lbs
  - Shoulder Lift (knuckle to shoulder height) 50 lbs
  - Overhead Lift (knuckle to overhead) 50 lbs

- Bilateral Carry 100lbs
- Single Arm Carry 50lbs
- Push/Pull 80lbs
- Frequent Power lift 75 lbs (heart rate <85% age predicted maximum).

Participants should abstain from eating, consuming caffeine or nicotine for several hours prior to testing. They should wear loose comfortable clothing and appropriate footwear (running shoes).

The fee for testing is \$200.00 which is payable by cash, debit or credit card prior to testing. Written results will be provided to the incumbents upon completion of the test. A copy of test results will be sent to the potential employer with permission of the incumbent.

Participants whose systolic blood pressure exceeds 150, diastolic blood pressure exceeds 100 or heart rate exceeds 100 beats/minute prior to testing will not be allowed to complete the lifting and aerobic component of the test. A letter addressed to the incumbent's physician will be provided which must be signed by the doctor in order to complete the test. Once this letter is provided back to us, a follow up test of the lifting and endurance components can be arranged. There is an additional \$75 fee to those who have to do further testing.

Should you have any further questions, please contact Alison Andress at the above address.

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