**Animal Search and Rescue (ASAR)**

**Fitness Guidelines**

Many factors influence the occurrence of an injury, its severity, and its outcome. Without a doubt, the health of the individual sustaining the injury is one of the more important factors. Animal Search and Rescue consists of periods of low activity punctuated by periods of intense, strenuous activity. Add the additional weight of personal and capture equipment along with the heat-retaining properties associated with dry suits and you have the ideal conditions for creating physiological stress. Good physical condition is a critical component in the body’s ability to deal with stress and to perform the task successfully and without injury.

Medical and fitness standards have not been established for Animal Search and Rescue (ASAR) positions. However, the duties of such positions require good fitness. Until standards are established, the ASAR Best Practices Working Group suggests following the guidelines for medical and fitness standards that have been established for wildland firefighters.

Wildland firefighters, much like ASAR responders, will engage in activities that call for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. There will also be times when the activity is “light” and calls for average endurance and conditioning. A number of Work Capacity Tests (WCT) have been established to ensure that responders assigned to various activities are physically capable of performing their duties. The WCT is a family of tests to determine responder physical capabilities at three levels:

1. Arduous. Duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.

2. Moderate. Duties involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

3. Light. Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending and stooping or light lifting. Individuals almost always can govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.

Each performance level has its own unique Work Capacity Test (Pack Test):

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| **Performance Level** | **Field Test** | **Time Required** |
| Arduous | 3-mile walk, 45 pound pack | 45 min |
| Moderate | 2-mile walk, 25 pound pack | 30 min |
| Light | 1-mile walk | 16 min |