

Sheriff



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OCSO IMPLEMENTS NEW PHYSICAL FITNESS POLICY

One of the initiatives for the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office in 2011 under new Sheriff Larry Ashley is implementation of an updated Wellness and Physical Abilities Testing Program.

The twelve page general order sets out the Sheriff's expectation that employees be able to meet the physical demands of law enforcement duties while also striving to maintain their personal wellness. Those actions will not only lessen their chances of injury or sickness, but also help to control agency funded health care costs.

Along with the obvious benefits, Sheriff Ashley says employees need to be sufficiently fit to perform under adverse conditions, pursue and subdue subjects, and appropriately protect and defend themselves and others.

Sworn employees will be required to obtain a Physical Abilities Test or PAT certification twice a year. The PAT consists of sixteen obstacles/stations to test agility, stamina, endurance, and more.

Sheriff Ashley says the updated policy is modeled after a successful program operated by the Citrus County Sheriff's Office and employees will get specialized attention from an agency Wellness Committee to help them work to meet the mandatory objectives.

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The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office is accredited by the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

"The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate"

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office



General Order

SUBJECT: Wellness and Physical Abilities Testing Program		Number: 36.12
Effective Date: January 1, 2011	Rescinds: GO 36.12 effective Jan. 1, 2010	Revision Date:
Distribution: All Members		CFA:

This General Order consists of the following sections:

- A. Purpose
- B. Policy
- C. Definitions
- D. Application
- E. Procedure

A. Purpose

The purpose of this general order is to set forth the expectation of the Sheriff that all (full and part time) employees of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) are capable of meeting the physical demands of law enforcement duty. While also ensuring both sworn and non-sworn OCSO employees strive to maintain their personal physical wellness to lessen their chances of injury or sickness and to control agency funded health care costs.

B. Policy

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office recognizes that good physical and mental health are essential attributes of a professional law enforcement officer. Employees must be sufficiently fit to perform under adverse conditions, pursue and subdue subjects, and

appropriately protect and defend themselves and others. Additionally, it is widely accepted that physical fitness promotes self-esteem, increases confidence and greatly enhances one's ability to perform strenuous or stressful duties. There is significant evidence supporting the benefits from participation in a health and fitness program, including the following:

1. Regular physical exercise reduces the effects of stress on the human body.
2. A physically fit employee is less susceptible to common injuries, and, if injured, tends to recover more rapidly.
3. Specific physical and mental health risks, such as heart disease, diabetes, orthopedic disorders and anxiety, are less likely to occur in individuals who exercise on a regular basis.
4. Physically fit employees tend to perform their duties with greater ease and tend to use less sick-leave.

C. Definitions

1. Physical Abilities Test (PAT) Certification- A status achieved by an employee after successful completion of the "Physical Abilities Testing Requirements and Responsibilities" which have been documented by the Training Division.
2. Agency Certified Trainer- An employee of the Sheriff's Office who has completed a course of health and fitness instruction approved by the agency, who is certified to train and evaluate employees on completion of the PAT.
3. Wellness Committee- No less than 5 and no more than 8 full time employees of the Sheriff's Office appointed by the Sheriff or his designee. Committee members assist employees in establishing a wellness program and obtaining PAT certification by ensuring proper

application of PAT testing policies and procedures. The Captain in charge of Professional Standards will serve as the committee chair. A vice-chair shall be selected by the chair of the committee.

D. Application

The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office shall require all sworn employee candidates to obtain PAT certification prior to employment. Failure to pass the PAT will result in their application being placed on hold.

1. JOB RELEVANCE

The PAT is designed to measure the ability of all sworn personnel to meet the physical demands of performing duties as a law enforcement officer. Successful completion of the PAT shall be considered an essential performance factor for every sworn employee.

2. FITNESS FOR DUTY – ILLNESS/INJURY/DISABILITY

- a. In certain situations where an employee is ill or has been injured and cannot obtain PAT certification, a fitness-for-duty determination may require examinations and medical physicals/evaluations to determine if subject employee is capable of meeting the physical demands of duty as a sworn employee of the agency. Fit for duty evaluations will be coordinated through the Human Resources Manager or their designee. Only licensed physicians or physician's assistants will be used to conduct medical evaluations and certify fitness-for-duty.
- b. Medical restrictions/limitations will be considered by the agency, consistent with applicable law. Employees requiring accommodation or determination of applicability of the American Disabilities Act (ADA) will contact the Human Resources Manager or their designee for assistance.

- c. Any medical evaluation/examination required of employees in permanent, full-time positions will be provided at no cost to the employee.

3. FITNESS PROGRAM

The Sheriff's Office will provide reasonable assistance to ensure all employees successfully obtain PAT certification. In order to encourage employees, both sworn and non-sworn, to successfully meet and maintain good physical health and fitness, all employees will be allowed to use on-duty time to exercise and utilize local physical fitness facilities subject to following provisions/restrictions:

- a. Permission to work out during duty hours is contingent upon supervisor's discretion and approval based on workload and the operational needs of the Sheriff's Office.
- b. The time allowed for on-duty workouts shall not exceed 1 ½ hours per calendar week (Sun-Sat) or 3 hours per pay cycle (two weeks). If mission requirements preclude an employee from working out during duty hours, there will be no entitlement with regard to the time.
- c. Employees unaccustomed to physical exertion must train within their physical limits to prevent injury and ensure they properly and safely improve their fitness level. The Wellness Committee should be contacted for assistance in establishing a viable physical training regime. When lifting heavy weights, climbing, jumping or engaging in other injury prone activities employees should train with a partner or spotter to help prevent mishaps and injuries.
- d. Employees may utilize local gyms as well as other facilities during on-duty workout time.

4. PHYSICALS AND HEALTH SCREENINGS

- a. New employees will provide physicals or health screenings as part of the application process.
- b. Employees may utilize agency provided health insurance for annual health screenings/physicals. Each employee will be responsible for scheduling physicals and meeting any co-payment or co-insurance requirements.

5. PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST (PAT) COURSE DESCRIPTION

All sworn employees will be required to complete the PAT, which is approximately one-half mile in length and consists of 16 obstacles/stations. Completion of the course will consist of the following (not necessarily in this exact order):

- a. Begin the course seated in a vehicle with the seat belt on and both hands on the steering wheel. When instructed, they will exit the vehicle, removing a training shotgun from the trunk. While using the vehicle as cover, they will simulate charging or “racking” the weapon, pulling the trigger, and laying the weapon down with the safety “on”. (Tests agility.)
- b. Sprint 40 yards. (Tests quickness/speed)
- c. Climb over a wall approximately four feet in height. (Tests agility)
- d. Run a serpentine, which will consist of 10 poles each placed approximately two yards apart. (Tests agility.)
- e. Jump over three hurdles of various heights (12", 18", and 24") spaced several yards apart without knocking the hurdle off its stand. (Tests agility.)
- f. Crawl under three markers placed approximately 27 inches from the ground and eight feet long without knocking over the markers from their stand. (Tests agility.)

- g. Jump over and clear a marked area of approximately four feet in length (simulated ditch/pit). (Tests agility.)
- h. Proceed through a large pipe approximately four to five feet in diameter. (Tests agility.)
- i. Cross a balance beam consisting of three 10 foot logs, for a total of 30 feet in length. The member must touch the red marker of the last log (or beyond) with at least one foot. (Tests agility.)
- j. Climb a ladder approximately two stories high (15 feet) and touch a bell at the top. When climbing down, the member must touch the next-to-last rung (marked with red) with at least one foot. (Tests agility.)
- k. Climb a flight of stairs to a simulated one-story landing. When climbing down, the member must touch the next-to-last stair (marked with red) with at least one foot. (Tests agility and stamina.)
- l. Proceed through a door with a training weapon drawn, properly identify a suspect, and then holster the weapon. A description of the suspect(s) will be provided at the beginning of the course. (Tests memory, sight, hearing, and gross motor skills.)
- m. Climb through a window opening with training weapon drawn then holster -or- approach the window with the weapon drawn, look through the window, then holster and proceed through the window. (Tests agility.)
- n. Drag a weight of approximately 150 pounds a distance of seventy feet. (Tests stamina and endurance.)
- o. Return to the vehicle and “dry-fire” a training handgun six times with each hand. (Tests fine motor skills.)

- p. Re-enter the vehicle, closing the door, and indicate that the assignment has been completed over the radio microphone. (Tests fine motor skills, memory, and logic.)
 - q. Failure to properly identify the correct suspect or failure to successfully complete any individual segment of the course disqualifies the attempt. Failure of an individual segment may be repeated as long as the overall time does not exceed eight minutes and thirty seconds.
6. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST (PAT)
- a. The PAT will be required biannually (Twice per year) for all sworn personnel.
 - b. Testing will be limited to daylight hours with due regard for temperature and humidity. Testing during times of extreme temperature and/or humidity will be avoided.
 - c. Members meeting the established minimum standard of eight minutes, 30 seconds (8:30:00) for the PAT will be deemed to be in compliance with the fitness policy.
 - d. Members who do not meet the minimum standard (as described above) shall be considered to have failed the PAT.
 - e. Failure to meet the minimum PAT standards will be designated by category as follows:
 - I. "Category 1": Failed to complete the course in less than 10 minutes and 30 seconds (10:30).
 - II. "Category 2": Completed the course in less than 10 minutes and 30 seconds (10:30), but more than 8 minutes and 30 seconds (8:30).
7. CATEGORY 1 FAILURE

Effective January 1, 2012, excluding exemptions as provided herein, a sworn employee who does not complete the PAT in less than 10 minutes and 30 seconds (10:30) will:

- a. Immediately be removed from sworn status.
- b. Be placed on leave without pay or at their request be authorized up to 30 days annual leave.
- c. Be ineligible for any specialty team assignments.
- d. Have any specialty pay discontinued.
- e. Be ineligible for off-duty assignments or secondary employment.
- f. Be responsible to fulfill all court and court-related responsibilities, attend scheduled in-service training and be compensated accordingly. During this time period, members will not be authorized to attend training offered outside of the agency.
- g. If successful completion of the PAT is not achieved within 30 days of the original failure, sworn personnel in category 1 may at the discretion of the Sheriff be permanently reassigned to non-sworn positions, if qualified, or if non-sworn positions are unavailable be terminated from the agency.

8. CATEGORY 2 FAILURE

Effective January 1, 2012, excluding exemptions as provided herein, a sworn employee who completed the PAT in less than 10 minutes and 30 seconds (10:30) but more than 8 minutes and 30 seconds (8:30) will:

- a. Be placed on 30 days probationary status.
- b. Be ineligible for any specialty team assignments.
- c. Have any specialty pay discontinued.

- d. Not be authorized to attend training offered outside of the agency.
- e. Be ineligible for off-duty assignments or secondary employment.
- f. If successful completion of the PAT is not achieved during the 30 day probationary period the member may at the discretion of the Sheriff be placed on 30 day unpaid level or at their request be authorized 30 days annual leave. If at the end of this 30 day period the member has not successfully completed the PAT the member may at the discretion of the Sheriff be permanently reassigned to non-sworn positions, if qualified, or if non-sworn positions are unavailable be terminated from the agency.

9. SPECIALITY TEAM REQUIREMENTS:

- a. Certain specialty teams or positions will have specific physical requirements to be eligible and remain on the team. These requirements will be specific to the type of specialty team and may exceed the minimum standard established in this directive.
- b. Enforcement of these requirements will be in accordance with the position or team's written policies and directives.

10. EXEMPTION FROM THE PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST (PAT)

Certain exemptions may apply to the Physical Abilities Test requirements including, but not limited to: employees on light (limited) duty or medical leave; employees who are pregnant or have temporary disabilities.

11. RETURN TO FULL, UNRESTRICTED DUTY

Employees returning to full, unrestricted duty will be required to meet all PAT requirements within 60 days unless an extension is requested, endorsed by the Wellness Committee, and granted by the Sheriff or Undersheriff.

12. EXTENSION FOR TIME TO COMPLETE THE PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST

Up to a 60-day extension to complete the PAT may be granted to employees returning to full unrestricted duty from light duty. The amount of extension time granted will be based upon the severity of the injury/illness and length of time off-duty or on light duty at the sole discretion of the Sheriff or Undersheriff.

E. Procedure

1. ADMINISTERING THE PHYSICAL ABILITIES TEST (PAT)

- a. Administration of the Physical Abilities Test may only be conducted by Agency Certified Trainers. PAT-certification can be achieved after instruction on “Physical Abilities Testing Requirements and Responsibilities” conducted and documented by Training.
- b. On a biannual basis, agency-certified trainers will schedule, test, and record PAT results for each sworn employee. All completed PAT records will be forwarded to the Training Section.
- c. Two agency certified trainers with separate timing devices will be present for each PAT conducted. Both times will be recorded on a Physical Abilities Test Score Sheet and submitted to the Training Section. Test failures will be recorded on the Physical Abilities Test Failure form. The form will be given to the employee with instructions to report to his/her division commander/director with the form. The division commander/director will forward the form to the Training Section after review and signature. If the employee is a division commander, the form will be reviewed and signed by a Major or above.

- d. All PAT testing of applicants will be administered by agency-certified trainers.

2. RELIEF FROM DUTY

Sworn employees who fail to successfully complete the PAT will report immediately to the Training Division.

3. MEDICAL FITNESS COMMITTEE

- a. The Wellness Committee will also serve as the Medical Fitness Committee. The Human Resources Manager shall serve as coordinator and will periodically review each employee's case that involves medical restrictions.
- b. The Committee will review the status of employees that have been on light duty for more than 90 days to determine the status of any sworn duty assignments. The review will be conducted monthly and on a case-by-case basis.
- c. The division commander of the affected member will provide information to the committee, if requested.
- d. The Human Resources Manager will maintain and disseminate all necessary documentation of the Medical Fitness Committee.
- e. Within five days of receiving medical clearance to return to full, unrestricted duty, employees previously on light (limited) duty may request the Wellness Committee to extend the date of PAT testing for up to 60 days based upon the severity of the injury/illness and length of time off duty or on light (limited) duty. Human Resources personnel will provide the form necessary to request the extension. The decision on length of time granted before PAT testing will be provided to the member in writing within 10 days of return to full duty.

4. RETURN TO FULL, UNRESTRICTED DUTY

- a. Sworn employees who have not taken or passed the PAT for the current biannual cycle and are returning to full, unrestricted duty will contact their supervisor within five business days of being cleared to schedule a PAT date.
- b. Sworn employees who have previously taken and passed the PAT for the current biannual cycle and are returning to full, unrestricted duty will notify their supervisor that they are cleared for full duty and will not be required to re-test until the appropriate test date is scheduled for the following biannual cycle.
- c. Supervisors shall contact the Human Resource Manager to determine the appropriate biannual test cut-off date and will direct the employee to complete the test as scheduled.
- d. To document the status change or request an extension, the sworn employee will complete a Physical Abilities Test Medical Clearance Form or Extension Request Form and submit it to the Human Resources Division. The employee will furnish a copy to his/her supervisor.

5. FORMS

- a. The supervisor responsible for agency training or his/her designee will maintain forms necessary to document the course completion in compliance with this written directive.
- b. The Human Resources Manager/designee will prepare, maintain, and approve forms necessary for the Wellness Committee and actions related to sworn position status.