



# Madison Fire Department Candidate Orientation Handout



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# Introduction

This handout is designed to help you prepare for the Madison, WI Fire Department Entry-Level Firefighter Examination. To be considered for an entry-level firefighter position at the Madison Fire Department, you will need to successfully go through multiple phases of the department's selection process. This handout discusses the main parts of the testing process including

- Part 1: FireTEAM Testing System
- Part 2: Structured Community Oral Board Interview
- Part 3: Fire Department Oral Board Interview
- Part 4: Fire Chiefs Interview
- Physical Ability Test (PAT), Medical Exam, and Background Check

The information provided in this handout is meant to be helpful and prepare you for the general nature of the process. The handout includes a general overview of each part of the selection process, general strategies for effective preparation and test-taking, and descriptions of procedures and materials you will encounter during each part of the selection process.

**Disclaimer:** The information provided in this handout is meant to be helpful and prepare you for the general nature of the process. It is not meant to advise you of every question that will be asked and some aspects of the process may be modified, if necessary. Additionally, the information in this booklet is not exhaustive. We encourage you to act upon whatever additional course of study or strategies you believe will enhance your chances of performing effectively.

## FireTEAM

The first part of the selection process is a video-based multiple-choice exam, FireTEAM Testing System. FireTEAM Testing System was developed to measure specific aptitudes important to the occupation of firefighter and emergency response personnel. There are four components to FireTEAM Testing System:

- Video-Based Human Relations Test
- Mechanical Aptitude Test
- Math Test
- Reading Ability Test

All test items were developed through rigorous research with panels of experienced firefighting and fire service professionals. You don't need firefighter or emergency response experience to answer the questions in this test. Common sense is always your best guide.

The answer sheet for FireTEAM is machine scored so mark only one answer for each question and fill in the circle completely. If you mark more than one answer, you will get the question wrong. If you don't know the answer to a question, the best strategy is to guess because you may get it right and you will definitely get it wrong if you don't answer.

### **FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test**

#### **28 Scenarios, 76 Questions (57 Minutes)**

##### **Part 1**

FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test focuses on teamwork and human relations skills and was specifically designed for firefighters. You will watch a video segment, and then choose the BEST course of action in a multiple choice format. Once you have chosen the BEST possible course of action, you will be asked to identify the WORST possible course of action. This test is presented on video and the items play without stopping. You will have 10 seconds to answer each question.

You don't need firefighting experience to answer these questions. FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test is not intended to be a test in any way of your knowledge of policy or technical aspects of the job. Any such information that may be needed to answer a question is provided in the test. For instance, in the video you will hear firefighters instructing business

owners about safety requirements. You are not expected to know anything other than what is stated. Base your answers only on information given in the test and your own common sense.

FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test is not meant as training or as an example of how firefighters should handle their jobs. In some cases, you will see firefighters who make poor choices about what to do.

None of the questions or answers are meant to be tricky. Although all the answers may not be equal in terms of common sense, they would all be choices available to the firefighter. In no case is an answer wrong because the choice would not be possible. For instance, a firefighter can make decisions based on circumstances about how to work with members of the public in enforcing safety regulations.

## **Part II**

In addition to answering the questions on Part I of FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test, you will be instructed to observe the behaviors of the individual firefighters portrayed. You will have the opportunity to observe behavior on multiple occasions for many of the firefighters. Part II of FireTEAM Video-Based Human Relations Test consists of questions about these firefighters and their behaviors. Part II is on the same video and immediately follows Part I.

## **FireTEAM Animated Mechanical Aptitude Test**

### **36 Questions (43 Minutes)**

FireTEAM Animated Mechanical Aptitude Test is a multiple-choice mechanical aptitude test presented on video. You will see a detailed introduction to an animated brick making factory and then be asked questions about the factory. Most of the questions are about basic mechanical objects such as valves and principles such as water pressure. You will also be asked to answer trouble shooting type questions and observe system operations for problems. All of the questions can be answered based on common sense and observation of how everyday objects work. FireTEAM Animated Mechanical Aptitude Test is also timed. You will see the introduction and each question only once. Again, after each question is presented, you will have a brief period to mark the answer you think is best before the next question is presented.

## **FireTEAM Math Test**

### **31 Questions (25 Minutes)**

This math test is designed specifically for firefighters. The questions are presented on video. You must complete the calculations in your head. No written calculation is permitted. Questions are based on the type of math that firefighters must use on a regular basis as part of

the job. Basic areas covered include: addition, subtraction, multiplication, division and proportions.

## FireTEAM Reading Test

### 25-27 Questions (15 Minutes)

This test is designed specifically for firefighters, a job requiring on-going study of difficult and technical materials. This test is based on training material and you will be required to choose a word that best fits in the blank. You are given 15 minutes to complete this test. Here is an example:

Example	Choices			
	A	B	C	D
This test is designed ___1___ for	1. never	specifically	usually	as
firefighters, a ___2___ requiring on- going study of difficult and technical materials.	2. job	test	vehicle	suspect

### Correct Responses:

For each of the blanks, only one of the answers provided makes sense. The only answers that make sense in the above example are:

1. B (specifically)
2. A (job)

### General Test Guidelines

Here are some general guidelines on what to expect during your FireTEAM exam.

- **Arrive early.** This is one of the easiest and most effective ways to minimize stress.
- **No electronic devices.** You are prohibited from receiving or sending pages, texts, photos or phone calls during any part of the testing process. No electronic devices are allowed in the testing room.

- **No chewing tobacco or smoking.** You are prohibited from chewing tobacco and smoking at the testing site.
- **Testing material cannot be taken.** You are prohibited from removing any material from the testing site.
- **Restroom breaks.** You are encouraged to use the restroom before entering the testing room. You will be allowed to use the restroom one at a time during the exam, however, the video will not stop. If you decide to take a restroom break, you may miss parts of the exam.

## Test Taking Tips

FireTEAM consists of multiple-choice questions. To get the highest score, always select the best choice listed, even if more than one seems good to you. Be sure to read all answers before deciding your final answer. Don't focus on a choice that is not given to you. Don't get distracted by thinking of other possible responses that are not among the choices presented. Don't get stuck on the idea that you want to combine two responses. Show your judgment by picking the one answer that, by itself, is better than any other answer, by itself.

Prepare yourself physically and mentally for your exam as you would prepare yourself for any special assignment that requires concentration. Get the amount of sleep that will leave you most alert. It's also a good idea to eat a nutritious and hearty meal to help you stay focused throughout your exam. Unusual changes in your routine may cause you problems during your exam. For example, consuming more caffeine than usual may make you jittery; less than usual may leave you listless. Try to remain calm and relaxed before and during your exam. If you feel anxious, take a few moments to calm yourself down. Bring to the test administration site whatever personal items you need for the exam, such as eyeglasses or tissues.

Here are some additional tips to help you during FireTEAM. These simple procedures will help you avoid marking the wrong answer when you know the right one.

1. **Listen to the instructions.** Before you begin the exam it is important that you read and/or listen to all instructions carefully. Ensure you know how to correctly fill out the answer sheet. Specific instructions will be provided at the test site.
2. **Read all of the answers before choosing one.** The most common answer people choose is **a**, whether it is right or not. That is because they think the first answer looks okay, so they stop reading. Don't make the mistake of not reading all of the answers before making a selection. Even if **a** looks like a really good answer, one of the other answers may be better. When you read the other alternatives, you may think of something you had missed at first.

3. **Use process of elimination.** If you aren't sure of the correct answer use process of elimination. Eliminate answer choices that you know are definitely wrong. Then focus on selecting the best answer from the choices remaining.
4. **Do not read something into the question that is not there.** On a situational question, assume that everything is normal unless the question tells you differently. Assume that the pavement is dry; visibility is good; your supervisor is competent; and citizens are behaving normally. When something is amiss, the question will tell you. Stick to the facts of the questions.
5. **Answer every question.** There is no penalty for guessing. Even if you don't know the correct answer, you have one chance in four of choosing the right one. If you can eliminate one or two of the alternatives, your chances are even better.
6. **Fill out your answer sheet correctly.** In marking the answer sheet, be sure to fill in the blank that corresponds to the answer you have chosen. If you skip a question, make sure you skip to the right space on the answer sheet. If you mark the wrong answer and want to change it, erase your first mark completely. Remember to only mark *one* answer for each question.
7. **Ask your Test Proctor.** A test proctor will be available during the exam to help you with the testing procedures; however, he or she will not explain the meaning of any question, define words, or give information which may be of help in answering a question. If you have any questions about the testing procedure, make sure to ask for assistance before the test begins.

## Test Your Assumptions

When taking your test, don't compromise your chances of success by trying to follow test-taking tips you may find online. Many of these tips are just bad advice and could cost you points. Use the following statements to test your assumptions.

### True or False

- | True  | False |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. If you don't know the answer to a test question, take a guess.<br><i>True! Guessing is not penalized and you just might get it right.</i>  |
| _____ | _____ | 2. Choose the longest answer option.<br><i>False! General pattern responses like this are a very poor way to approach a modern test. The length of the answer choices is not an indication of an incorrect or correct response.</i> |
| _____ | _____ | 3. Choose the answer option that seems most logical to you.<br><i>True! Rely on your knowledge of the assigned publications to think critically and logically when answering a question.</i>  |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Choose the answer with a middle value when other options are higher or lower.  
*False! This is another piece of bad advice you might come across somewhere. No such pattern as this is present on Ergometrics' tests.*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. More often than not, the correct answer is B or C.  
*False! Once again, poor advice. General pattern strategy is not a way to pass a modern test. There is no pattern to Ergometrics' correct answers. Answer questions by content, not by old, incorrect advice or superstitions.*

## **Test Security and Confidentiality**

Character is an important aspect of the testing process. You will be required to sign a security and confidentiality agreement stating that you have not and will not violate test security through coaching or exchange of specific information about FireTEAM test items. Breach of this agreement is subject to prosecution under federal copyright law and would be viewed as an unacceptable integrity failure for an employee or prospective employee.

No electronic devices are allowed in the testing session due to test security, confidentiality and laws associated with testing. Prohibited devices include cellular phones, pagers, audio/radio headsets, cameras, recording devices or other electronic devices. Possession of one or more of these devices will result in disqualification.

Briefcases, backpacks, purses and other personal items must also be left outside the testing center. Following completion of the test, candidates must leave the testing premises. Failure to obey the rules and instructions before, during and after the examination may result in disqualification and further disciplinary action.

## **FireTEAM Sample Question**

At the Madison Fire Department website

(<http://www.cityofmadison.com/fire/join-mfd/application-process>) you will find sample questions that show you what a video based questions will look like.

## Parts 2 – 4: Oral Board Interviews

Parts two, three, and four of the selection process will consist of three oral board interviews: Structured Community Oral Board Interview, Fire Department Oral Board Interview, and Fire Chiefs Interview. To move forward to the second oral board (i.e., Fire Department Oral Board Interview), you must successfully pass the Structured Community Oral Board Interview. To be invited to participate in the Fire Chiefs Interview, you must successfully pass both initial interviews. Provided is a brief overview to help you prepare for the interview component of the selection process.

### Overview

For the Structured Community Oral Board Interview, you will answer interview questions in front of a panel consisting of three non-active fire department personnel. The panel members will be members of the Madison community and will evaluate you on many factors including, but not limited to, oral communication skills and life experiences to determine your overall fit with the organization. If you pass the Structured Community Oral Board Interview, you will move forward to the Fire Department Oral Board Interview.

The Fire Department Oral Board Interview will consist of a panel of one member of the Command staff, one Local 311 member, and one community member or City of Madison employee. The panel will be evaluating you on multiple factors including, but not limited to, your knowledge of firefighting, your understanding of the Madison Fire Department, and your overall fit with the organization. If you pass the Fire Department Oral Board Interview, your interview scores will be combined with your FireTEAM score. Your combined FireTEAM and interview scores will be used for consideration for the Fire Chiefs Interview. For the Fire Chiefs Interview, the panel will consist of the Fire Chief as well as two additional chief officers. During the Fire Chief oral board, you will be asked various interview questions to assess your overall fit with MFD.

### Oral Board Tips

There are many other resources, including books, classes and on-line resources that are available, should you choose to use them. In the interviews, you will interact directly with a panel that will ask questions, listen to your answers and observe your behavior. There is nothing to be gained, and much to be lost, by trying to pretend you are someone other than who you are. You do, however, want to show yourself to your best advantage.

Here are some key things to remember as you prepare for the interview component.

- **Arrive early.** This is one of the easiest and most effective ways to minimize stress.

- **Prepare.** You may be able to do well without preparing, but you can always do better with preparation. Remember, you are competing against others who are also very good and you need to do your best to stand out as excellent. The more prepared you are, the more relaxed and confident you will be. There are many ways you can prepare.
  - **Understand the job.** Understanding the job itself is the most important way to improve your competitiveness. The more you understand about the position and the Madison Fire Department, the better you will be able to answer potential questions relating to the job and organization.
  - **Minimize how much you will need to “wing it.”** An interview is like an emergency response. You never know precisely what the demands will be, but the more you have practiced what you can, the easier it is to improvise and adapt. You will always have to demonstrate flexibility and on-the-spot thinking. Try to develop your thinking as much as you can in advance. Learn as much as you can about the job. Think about how you would handle job challenges like those you have seen during your prior experiences.
- **Credentials.** Credentials, such as degrees, are an important part of your resume and preparation for an interview. The best way to make your credentials seem impressive is not simply to mention them in isolation, but to bring them up in relation to your answer on a question. For instance, you may say, “While getting my degree, I took several courses related to this position. I learned about the importance of . . . . .,” and then discuss how what you learned is connected with your answer to a question. This shows how you can apply what you have learned. But remember, panelists usually don’t like being told repeatedly during interviews of specific credentials.
- **Dress well.** In some cases you will be told what to wear to the interview, but if not, dress and behave as you would for a formal presentation. If you are considering a casual “come as you are” style, think about how your competition will be dressed. Remember, you are the focus of the interview and presentation.
- **Don’t pretend.** Represent yourself honestly and don’t try to fake it. Don’t spin your experience to sound like something it’s not. Don’t use words you don’t know as that is a quick way to cast doubt on your credibility, intelligence and integrity. It is easy for panelists to identify candidates who have memorized answers to questions that they don’t really understand or believe.
- **Display confidence.** Demonstrate your confidence in being able to take on the new position. Imagine the most effective and confident individual you can think of and embody his or her demeanor.
- **Show that you can communicate openly.** Answer questions directly and be sure to use eye contact.

- **Never answer a question you don't understand.** Always ask for clarification if you are uncertain about what is being asked.
- **Don't act confused.** If you are confused just say so and work with the panel to achieve clarification.
- **Don't self-deprecate or apologize for your answers.** Even if you don't think you've answered a question well, don't put yourself down. Apologizing for your answers will make you look less confident and competent. All you need to do is answer all interview questions the best that you can.
- **Think aloud.** Whatever your answer to a question is, the panel may understand it better if you think aloud. Considering options demonstrates critical thinking, an important skill for all positions.
- **Imagine yourself in the panel's place.** Be friendly and respectful to the panel; they are trying to do a good job, just like you. Don't act offended or defensive if they ask for information that you think they should already know. This is your chance to show how gracious you are in public situations and how easy you might be to work with.
- **Don't make assumptions.** The panelists are considering large amounts of complex information about many candidates. Don't assume anyone has memorized anything from your resume or file. If something is important for understanding what you are saying, just tell them.
- **Be concise in your communication.** Sufficient time is provided in the interview to communicate the necessary answers to questions asked. If you use more than your allotted time, you will be taking time from others and placing stress on the panel.
- **Relax as much as you can.** Try to maintain physical relaxation and use appropriate gestures. Smile - don't act like you are in pain and don't feel you have to fill every silence. Answer questions and then wait for the next question. At the end of the interview, thank the panel.
- **Do your best.** The most important thing is to represent yourself honestly and do your best.

## Physical Ability Test (PAT)

The PAT is a standardized entry-level firefighter physical ability test designed for MFD to assess your readiness for the physical demands of firefighting. It is given to candidates that move on in the process and after the interview with the Fire Chief. In particular, the test is designed to demonstrate that you have the sufficient stamina, strength, and agility to accomplish the critical tasks of a firefighter. The PAT consists of seven events that occur sequentially within a specified time limit. Points are awarded for successful completion of each event.

The PAT simulates actual job duties of firefighters. Each event represents one or more duties that a firefighter might perform on a fire scene. Each is only a simulation, however, as the safety and fairness of the test is more important than perfectly replicating every job duty.

In addition to reading this manual, it is strongly recommended that you also view the accompanying orientation video to better familiarize yourself with the events of the PAT. You should become as familiar with the test as you can before taking it to ensure that your success or failure on the exam is due solely to your physical capabilities and not a misunderstanding of the events. Prior to your actual test, you will be provided the opportunity to review and practice the actual PAT under the guidance and supervision of MFD personnel.

This guide will provide you with an overview of the PAT, descriptions of each of the seven events, the purpose of each event, and information on what is required to pass each event.

### Overview

The PAT is a sequence of events requiring you to progress along a predetermined sequence from event to event in a continuous manner. You will be provided with an opportunity to perform an orientation session during which you will receive practice with the test equipment.

You must arrive to the test wearing:

- Long or short sleeve shirt.
- Long pants (sweatpants are acceptable).
- Close-toed shoes (tennis shoes are acceptable).

Before you begin your test, MFD will provide you with a safety helmet, gloves, and a 40 pound weighted vest. This equipment provided must be worn throughout your test, unless directed by a proctor.

The events are arranged to simulate the progression of events at a fire scene while also allowing for recovery time between the more physically demanding tasks. As you move from event to event, a proctor will give you instructions on how to perform each event. All events were designed to obtain the critical information regarding your physical ability. All of the tools and equipment were specifically selected to provide consistency, safety, and validity in measuring your physical fitness level. There is more than one way to safely accomplish the events on the PAT. Various techniques are demonstrated on the video orientation.

Each event is timed so you should move swiftly but safely through the course, but do not run. To continue in the selection process you must successfully pass at least five of the seven events and you must follow the proctor instructions.

## **Description of Each Event**

### **Stepmill/Stair Climb**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates continuous stair climbing to get to the fire floor or reach a victim.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to step on a stepmill at a rate of approximately 69 steps per minute. You need to step continuously for at least 4 minutes and 28 seconds to pass this event. If you step off or fall during the first 30 seconds, get back on immediately and your event time will be restarted. If you step off or fall after 30 seconds, but less than 90 seconds, your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified from the PAT. If you step off or fall off after more than 90 seconds, you will fail the Stepmill event, but you will be allowed to continue the PAT.

### **Ladder Event**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates various activities related to using a ladder including carrying and raising a ladder.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to remove a 20' straight ladder from a rack, carry it some distance, place it on the floor within a marked area, and raise and lower a 35' extension ladder. You will then return to the ladder on the ground, pick it up and return it to the rack from which it was taken. The event ends when the ladder is put back correctly on the rack. To pass, you must correctly place the ladder back in the rack

within 90 seconds. If you take longer than 2 minutes and 5 seconds, your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

### **Hose Drag/Advance**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates moving and handling a fully charged hose at the scene of a fire.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to pull 50 feet of hose through a U-shaped course with several turns. There will be a ceiling on the U-shaped course to prevent you from standing up. To pass, you must complete the event in 49 seconds or less. If you take longer than 90 seconds, your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

### **Sledge Hammer /Axe Event**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates the actions necessary to cut a hole in dwelling roof with an axe for ventilation or to gain access.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to forcefully strike an impact plate a total of twelve times. To pass, you must complete 12 blows in 14 seconds or less. If you take longer than 30 seconds your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

### **Search Event**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates the actions necessary to enter and search a smoke-filled structure.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to crawl through a dark wooden tunnel with obstructions and turns. The tunnel is approximately 65 feet long. To pass, you must complete the event within 1 minute and 13 seconds. If you take longer than 1 minute and 45 seconds, your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

### **Rescue through a Doorway**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates the actions necessary to drag an unconscious victim out through a doorway to get the victim to safety.
- **Event Description:** You will be required to drag an approximately 130-pound dummy approximately 75 feet, along a zigzag course to a designated area at the end of the course. In this event, there is a low ceiling over the course to prevent you from standing upright. To pass, you must complete the event in 57 seconds or less. If you take longer than 90 seconds your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

## **Pike Pole**

- **Simulated Firefighter Task:** This event simulates using a pike pole to tear down a ceiling after a fire. A pike pole is a firefighting tool used to tear down ceilings or open walls while looking for hidden fires.
- **Event Description:** This event will require you to take a pike pole tipped with an industrial hook, and thrust it upward at a metal plate in an eight-foot ceiling. The metal plate weighs approximately 60 pounds and must be lifted six inches in order for the strike to count. You will then step over to the next part of the event, where a pike pole handle is suspended from a ceiling height. The pole is attached to a counter balance that weighs approximately 80 pounds. You must pull the pole down six inches in order for the pull to count. A single repetition is 1 push -5 pulls. The event will require you to perform four one-minute work periods, in which you will do as many push-pull repetitions as possible. Each work period will be followed by a 30 second rest period. You'll need to complete 20 or more repetitions total to pass the Pike Pole. If you fail to complete at least 16 repetitions, your test will be concluded and you will be disqualified.

## **Test Taking Tips**

Because the PAT is physically demanding, it is suggested you refrain from eating at least two hours prior to your test. You are urged to drink plenty of fluids beginning the day before the test and continuing up until the time you are tested. Sports drinks or other liquids containing electrolytes such as salt or sugar are recommended. Eating a healthy meal beforehand will also reduce the chance of dizziness or sickness during the test and ensure adequate energy levels. Water will be provided on-site. Avoid drinking caffeinated beverages and smoking before the test. You are also advised to stretch and warm-up before participating in the test.

## **Medical Exam and Background Check**

In addition to successfully passing the PAT, you will also have to pass a medical exam and background check. The medical exam will comply with NFPA 1582: Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments. Additional information on the medical exam and background check will be provided to you, if you move forward to this stage of the process.