

Agency being nominated Dallas Fire-Rescue Department

Provide the program name and a brief description in this box.

Name: DFRD Wellness-Fitness Program

Description: The Dallas Fire-Rescue Department created a Wellness-Fitness Program that is mandatory for all members of the Emergency Response Bureau. The program, which is modeled after NFPA 1582, was created in an effort to increase the awareness of our personnel of their health and well-being through a series of medical evaluations and physical fitness assessments. The DFRD has a contract with a physician group, MedProvider of Texas, to perform the medical physical evaluations on our members. The initial physicals have proven to be very successful. Through anecdotal accounts, the department is aware of at least ten firefighters who have been diagnosed with blocked cardiac arteries which required surgical intervention. Additionally, at least ten firefighters have had a confirmed diagnosis of a variety of cancers. Another important feature of the program was the training and certification of forty-seven firefighters as Peer Fitness Trainers through the Cooper Institute of Dallas. These members will assure the success of the program at the station level by providing members with nutritional and physical fitness advice.

Date the nominated project/activity was originally implemented March 2008
Month/Year
Minimum one-year operational period required for submission

Nominator's name and title Eddie Burns Sr., Fire Chief

Agency or organization Dallas Fire-Rescue Department

IAFC Division Southwest

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The fire chief or chief executive officer must sign this nomination form.

Name of fire chief/EFO Eddie Burns Sr., Fire Chief

Chief/EFO's signature _____ Date _____

Phone _____ Email _____
(if different from nominator)

1. Please describe the nature of the project/activity being nominated, using the space provided. Be specific.

The Dallas Fire-Rescue Department recognizes that the health, safety, and wellness of its firefighters are of the utmost importance to the organization. The Wellness-Fitness Program has been established to monitor the health and wellness of firefighters throughout their careers. This program is designed to reduce injuries, provide early detection of serious medical conditions, and encourage better health and fitness, thereby allowing firefighters to do their job more safely and effectively. These goals will lead to firefighters having a healthy and productive career and retirement. The program is modeled after the IAFF/IAFC wellness-fitness initiative, and NFPA Standards 1500, 1582, and 1583.

The Wellness-Fitness Program applies to the 1500 uniformed members of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department that are assigned to the Emergency Operations Bureau. The goal of the Department is to make the program available to all employees of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department. This program is a medical surveillance program which considers the special circumstances associated with the firefighting profession. The Fire Department Physician, MedProvider of Texas, is an outside entity contracted by the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department. Through a series of tests and procedures, the Fire Department Physician diagnoses medical problems that may exist and make a determination of how that condition may affect the member's ability to perform firefighting operations. The Fire Department Physician does not treat members for any medical problems which are discovered, nor does the physician refer members for treatment. When a medical condition is discovered that impairs the member's ability to safely and successfully complete his/her firefighting duties, the member is required to seek treatment for that condition from his/her personal physician. However, the Fire Department Physician will make final duty status determinations.

Following the medical evaluation, each member who is cleared by the physician participates in a fitness evaluation. This evaluation assesses aerobic capacity, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and body composition. The fitness evaluation was implemented to confirm the member could perform the essential functions, job duties and requirements of his/her position listed in NFPA 1582. The DFRD uses the American College of Sports Medicine guidelines to rate our members. Each member's fitness level will be recorded annually, so the member's progress can be evaluated. Areas that are tested annually are aerobic capacity, trunk flexibility, strength and endurance. The DFRD established an incentive for members to stay in good physical condition. The incentive consists of a monetary reward and a T-shirt for the members who score above average in their fitness evaluation.

The department has a team of Peer Fitness Trainers available to assist individuals or work groups in the development and implementation of workout routines. These members have received training and are certified Fire Service Specialist Fitness Trainers through the Cooper Institute of Dallas. The Peer Fitness Trainers have also been educated on nutrition and are able to provide guidance to our members on this subject.

All new recruits are required to pass the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) prior to being hired. These recruits are then required to undergo a medical physical assessment through the Wellness-Fitness Program as one of the final steps before being hired. The medical exam is modeled after on the guidelines set forth by NFPA 1582. Another component of the Wellness-Fitness program is the department's Communicable Disease Coordinator. The nurse ensures all recruits, as well as our incumbents, is current on their immunizations and administers the Hepatitis vaccinations. The Communicable Disease Coordinator also manages cases when a member is exposed to respiratory, blood borne, or a chemical substance. The Wellness-Fitness program also serves as an educational resource to employees. Information and tips are displayed on the department's intranet page, posters are sent to stations, and the Fitness Coordinator visits stations to give advice.

2. Why is this project/activity innovative and/or creative? Be specific.

The Wellness-Fitness Program has a Communicable Disease Coordinator, CDC, who is a full-time employee of the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department and a Registered Nurse. The CDC is responsible for providing case management care for exposure case employees. The CDC educates the DFRD employee about exposure prevention, evaluation, and treatment. The CDC coordinates between various health care providers and services to ensure that the employee's needs are being met. The CDC is responsible for immunizing employees to assure that the employees are at a protective immune level. In addition, the CDC is responsible for employee health records, CDC activity reports, and community participation, as it relates to communicable disease prevention and health care.

Since the DFRD Wellness-Fitness Program did not have a facility for the administration of the physical exams, a lot of coordination and foresight was needed to have a successful program. When looking for an outside agency to administer the exams, along with having the capabilities to meet all the program's needs, it was vital to have a location that was centrally located. The central location ensures fire companies a quick return to service and also minimizes the cost of travel. MedProvider of Texas is able to perform all testing/evaluation components at one location. The physical examinations, chest x-rays, stress test and labs are all conducted at one time without the firefighter having to go to another site.

The creation of the Wellness-Fitness Program has increased the members desire to get fit or stay in shape. All fifty-six fire stations in the City of Dallas have sufficient weight lifting equipment, but some are in need of aerobic equipment. Unable to purchase aerobic equipment due to budgetary restraints, a friendship developed between the Wellness-Fitness Program and Bally's Fitness. When a Bally's gym closes or is getting new equipment, the DFRD is called and offered the used equipment. This has enabled the Wellness-Fitness Program to provide many of the stations with quality aerobic equipment.

3. Describe community or citizen participation in the planning or initiation of the project/activity. Be specific.

The Cooper Institute is a leader in the wellness and preventive medicine field and consulted with the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department about developing a Peer Fitness Trainer program for firefighters. Cooper Institute's experience with police and military organizations was a good foundation for developing the Peer Fitness program. Cooper Institute modified their existing Peer Fitness program for police officers into a stand alone program designed for firefighters. They were able to understand the physical demands firefighters face on a daily basis by reviewing DFRD's job descriptions at different emergencies. Another important development in the program was Cooper Institute understanding the lifestyle of firefighters. They realized that firefighters are industrial athletes and must be ready to respond at any time, eat nutritionally, and each shift deal with stressful situations.

Through a cooperative arrangement with MedProvider of Texas, a physician group aligned with Baylor University Medical Center, the evaluations and assessments have been very successful. The physicians and staff of MedProvider have ensured the success of this program. They have embraced this program whole heartedly and continue to seek ways to enhance service delivery through the evaluation of their internal procedures and the purchase of new equipment. They have continually shown a spirit of cooperation and customer service. The seventeen physicians involved have sought to understand the special needs of firefighters and the importance of this program to the firefighters. Through on-going meetings and lectures, these physicians have an enhanced knowledge of the medical problems that plague the firefighting profession. Each time, they have embraced the knowledge and enthusiastically applied it to their portion of the process. The entire MedProvider staff has shown a great deal of enthusiasm regarding this project.

The Baylor Heart and Vascular Hospital has developed a rehab program that is geared toward firefighters who have undergone a cardiac procedure. The program is an occupation-specific rehabilitation training program to help firefighters with cardiac disease safely return to work. This program gives firefighters the confidence that they are fit and healthy to do the job as before.

4. Describe any improvements in the delivery of services and cost savings that resulted from this project or activity.

There have been many accounts that illustrate the success of the Wellness-Fitness Program. Through personal accounts, there have been at least ten firefighters who have been diagnosed with blocked cardiac arteries which required surgical intervention. Additionally, at least ten firefighters have had a confirmed cancer diagnosis. Over two hundred firefighters have been diagnosed with conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol. These conditions are currently under a physician's care and treatment. The Wellness-Fitness program will continue to monitor these conditions for many years to come. The future savings for the City of Dallas are evident when looking at all the cases that have been diagnosed and are now being treated.

As well as the early detection and treatment of medical problems, firefighters have attained much of the following:

- Weight reduction and/or control
- Bringing blood pressure and cholesterol under control
- Reducing stress and depression
- Up-to-date Immunizations
- Greater strength, stamina, and flexibility
- Decreased injuries
- Improved performance in delivery of services to citizens
- Improved mobility, balance, and coordination
- Future long, healthy, and productive retirement

The Dallas-Fire Rescue Department is determined to deliver the finest services to the citizens of Dallas. The Wellness-Fitness Program is an example of how the DFRD is committed to this value: by promoting a healthy and productive firefighter, reducing the injury cost, and providing the citizens with safe and effective service.

SUMMARY SHEET

Contact person

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Name of project/activity:

Dallas Fire-Rescue Department's Wellness-Fitness Program

Description of project/activity:

The Wellness-Fitness Program covers medical physicals, fitness evaluations, nutritional guidance, and advice on exercise routines. The program also has a Communicable Disease Coordinator (CDC) to provide immunizations for recruits and incumbents. The CDC also manages exposure cases for the DFRD. Members are given a physical by MedProvider of Texas and are placed in one of three duty status levels. Any firefighter whose status level is not Fit for Duty must go to his/her primary physician within 45 days to have the diagnosis treated. Peer Fitness Trainers in the field assist fellow firefighters with exercise and nutrition. Firefighters have access to workout equipment is at each of the 56 fire stations and at the department's centrally located Fitness Center. Educational advice covering these topics: fitness, medical, stress and injury prevention are available to members through the Intranet, mail outs, and the department's annual Health Fair.

Describe planning and/or initiation of the project or activity:

The DFRD modeled the program after the IAFF/IAFC wellness-fitness initiative and NFPA Standards 1500, 1582, and 1583. Upon developing the program, MedProvider physicians were educated on physical demands of firefighters and the medical concerns that are prevalent in the firefighting profession. To ensure acceptance of the program by the majority of the members, representatives from the different associations within the department were informed of the policies of the program and asked for feedback. Cooper Clinic was contacted to develop a Peer Fitness Trainer program and forty-seven members of the department were trained and educated, so they can provide assistance to their fellow firefighters. The Communicable Disease Coordinator was incorporated into the program to provide more care to the health and well-being for the members of DFRD.

Briefly summarize the cost effectiveness or improvement of service delivery:

All components of the Wellness-Fitness Program work together to provide a healthy and efficient department to meet the needs of the citizens of Dallas. The cost effectiveness of the program can be measured in different ways. The first measurement is in the firefighters: Lives have been saved; lifestyles have improved; lives have been extended, so members can enjoy long and healthy retirement. The city will see the cost effectiveness of the program in the coming years because of reduction in the number injuries. The city will also benefit from having a healthier department. Medical conditions are being diagnosed early, therefore minimizing the number of major complications that may arise.