

This project started with an injury, and with any injury at our department you have to pass our physical ability test to be able to return to work in the firehouse.

While in physical therapy the discussion was held about what physical goals needed to be met to get back to work. A video of our ability test was shown to the physical therapist so they could come up with a plan to get our member back to work. When the therapist saw the video she was shocked to find out what we needed to accomplish to be fit for duty. The therapist showed the orthopedic surgeon and the surgeon was not surprised that the injury occurred.

After the first injury, a second injury happened and then a third. 3 similar injuries in 3 different members of the department. Looking back we were required to complete our ability test twice a year to prove we were "fit for duty". We needed to evaluate what was happening and get better at being proactive and not reactive.

With permission and support from our Fire Chief, our safety committee began the long process of evaluating what we do and why we do it. We started with what we do working for Midway Fire Rescue. We didn't look at other departments and try to copy what they did. We needed to look at what our department, and our community demanded of our people. We then looked at the NFPA essential job tasks for firefighting. (NFPA 1582 (2018) guideline 8.2.2.1.2 thru 8.2.2.1.4)

With many meetings, discussions, research and disagreements the Safety Committee came up with a test that consisted of 13 tasks that would properly and safely evaluate our members. The Midway Fire Rescue (JRAT) Job Related Ability Test was created. With the test on paper we needed to make each of the 13 stations a reality. We had one big hurdle, we had a budget of \$0.00

The committee constructed each station with what we had around the training yard and with random donations from our community. After that was completed we needed to test and validate the new JRAT test. With the data from our old test we took 5 members of the department and asked them to volunteer to take the new test so we could evaluate the test and make sure it worked in a practical sense. From the old test data we took the fastest time, slowest time, and the oldest member of the department, the youngest member of the department and a female to help us test our new JRAT. Each member was timed as they completed the 13 task test as well as an additional time taken on how quick they finished each of the individual tasks. The times were averaged and the data was placed into a report.

After the test a survey was sent to each of the test participants asking questions, for example: - Was the test too hard or too easy? Was the test better than our previous test? Do you think this test evaluated our job requirements with Midway Fire Rescue? What would you change about the test? We wanted true feedback from our membership. With all the data in hand there were some obvious changes that needed to be made. The Safety Team took the time to do more research and a bunch of personal time to improve the new test. Again we needed to test and validate the process. The original 5 people volunteered to take the test again. A testament to our firefighters who are willing to make our department better every day.

Now that the Safety Team was happy with the new test and the data was compiled into a report, it was time to present all the information to the Fire Chief. After more than a year of research, meetings, disagreements, testing and validation we had a finished test.

The Safety Committee did not take this on for personal praise or to make the testing process easier. I don't even think they know we are being considered for this award or that I am even here. They did this for the health of our Brothers and Sisters. We have not stopped. We have continued to look at and have come up with a plan for the situation when a member fails the JRAT. WE are still working on a process to help our members get better at each of the 13 tasks and also a tiered incentive program for optimal completion times.

In closing if you have support from your Fire Chief and your County Administration your people can do anything to better the department and the health and wellness of your people. You can have the best tools, the best fire trucks, the best training division but if you don't have people to make them work you have nothing. The health and wellness of our people needs to be a top priority.