CAMBRIDGESHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

BE THE DIFFERENCE.

Occupational Ability Tests and Exercises

PREVENT
PROTECT
RESPOND

Introduction

If you successfully progress through the early stages of the recruitment process, you'll be invited to complete the Occupational Ability Tests and Exercises at our Training Centre in Huntingdon. This guide is here to help you prepare - so you'll know exactly what to expect on the day and how to give your best performance.

This assessment includes a physical ability circuit and lasts about 2–3 hours and includes six core physical tests.

All stages are one-person time-trial style exercises designed to reflect real-life firefighter tasks, assessing your:

- Fitness, strength, stamina
- Coordination and manual dexterity
- Confidence around heights, confined spaces, and simulated scenarios.



Overview of the six tests

During the assessment day, you'll complete six physical tasks that reflect real-life firefighter duties. Each one is designed to test different elements of fitness, strength, coordination, and confidence.

To help you feel fully prepared, videos of each test are available and we recommend watching them in advance so you know what to expect on the day. All the videos are on our careers website - www.cambsfire.gov.uk/careers

1 Enclosed space

This test assesses your confidence, agility, and stamina, while also identifying any signs of claustrophobia. Wearing a breathing apparatus with an obscured facemask, you'll navigate a dark, enclosed crawl space. The test is timed and designed to simulate working in confined, low-visibility environments.



2 Ladder climb

This tests assesses your confidence at height and ability to follow instructions. What to Expect:

You'll climb a 13.5m ladder, lock your leg in position and lean back with arms outstretched. You'll also be asked to look over your shoulder to identify a symbol from ground level.



3 Casualty evacuation

This test measures your upper and lower body strength, as well as your coordination and ability to move safely under load.

You'll be required to drag a 55 kg dummy around a 30 m course marked by four cones, simulating the evacuation of a casualty from a hazardous area. The test is timed and must be completed using safe lifting and handling techniques.

WATCH VIDEO

4 Ladder lift

This test assesses your upper and lower body strength, focusing on safe lifting technique and controlled movement.

Using a ladder lift simulator, you'll be asked to raise a weighted bar to a height of 190 cm. The cradle will carry 15 kg of additional weight, resulting in a total lift load of approximately 30 kg. You'll have the opportunity to complete a practice lift with 5 kg to familiarise yourself with the equipment before the timed assessment begins.

WATCH VIDEO

5 Equipment Carry

This test evaluates your aerobic fitness, stamina, full-body strength, and coordination - all essential for handling equipment in operational settings.

You'll be required to carry various pieces of firefighting equipment back and forth along a 25 m shuttle course. Each item must be lifted and moved using safe manual handling techniques, which will be demonstrated beforehand. The test is timed and designed to simulate the physical demands of transporting kit during an incident.

WATCH VIDEO

6 Equipment assembly

This test assesses your manual dexterity, ability to follow instructions, and perform tasks accurately under time pressure.

You'll first be shown a demonstration of how to assemble and disassemble a portable pump. After observing the process, you'll be asked to complete the same task independently, using a series of visual prompts to guide you. The test is timed and reflects the practical, hands-on skills needed in operational environments.

WATCH VIDEO

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Health & Safety Reminder

- Wear suitable clothing and footwear.
- Warm-up before and cool-down after exercises.
- If you have health concerns- like pregnancy, recent injury, or illness - consult your doctor first.
- Avoid attending the day if you are injured or feeling unwell.

On the day

- Arrive rested and hydrated.
- Wear appropriate, comfortable activewear.
- Familiarise yourself with all demonstrations and follow the instructions from our team.
- Ask questions if anything is unclear.
- Stay calm and focused on the task.

Remember, these assessments aren't just about strength. It's about how you move, how you think, and how you apply technique under pressure. Safe lifting, controlled movement, and following instructions are just as important as your fitness.

Take your time, use the techniques shown in the demonstrations, and focus on working safely and effectively.

With the right preparation and mindset, you'll give yourself the best possible chance of performing well and progressing to the next stage.

Make a difference.

Be the difference.