

# Medical Information Sheet

## Chronic health conditions

Fit for Emergency

May 2016

### What is the situation?

Individuals who have been diagnosed with a chronic medical condition will be asked to provide additional information from their treating practitioner as part of the Fit for Emergency (FFE) medical assessment. This information will be used, along with the FFE medical assessment, to ensure that the employee is safe to perform the inherent requirements of the firefighting role. An emergency role category (A-H) will then be provided.

### Why are things changing?

Firefighters perform functions that are physically and psychologically very demanding. Furthermore, firefighting is a safety-critical job, meaning that the ill health of the firefighter poses a significant risk to the health and safety of others. Because of this additional risk, strict medical guidelines have been developed that the medical practitioner is required to assess you against. Safety-critical medical guidelines are stricter than non-safety critical medical guidelines to protect the health and safety of yourself and others when fighting fires.

### How is severity determined?

For those individuals with chronic medical conditions further information will be sought from the individual's treating practitioner to determine the following factors:

- Diagnosis, including relevant investigation findings and reports
- Management plan
- Stability of the condition
- Prognosis
- Any restrictions or limitations required
- Suitability for the following activities:
- Strenuous activity
- Exposure to respiratory irritants such as inhaled dust, smoke and fumes
- Extreme environmental conditions (heat / risk of dehydration)

If an individual brings this information along to their FFF assessment it may allow the assessing doctor to make an informed decision regarding their classification on the same day, rather than requesting reports from their doctor/specialist at the time of assessment, subsequently delaying your final Fit for Fire classification.

**Note:** it may still be necessary for the assessing doctor to request further information from your treating doctor despite you bringing a report with you to the assessment

Based on the above assessment, the department's medical provider will then determine the most suitable fire role classification and category.

### What are chronic medical conditions?

The term chronic is often applied to a medical condition when it lasts for a long period of time, generally more than 3 months. If you have been diagnosed with a medical condition and it has persisted (or likely to persist) for more than 3 months, further information from your treating practitioner will be sought.

Examples of chronic medical conditions include:

- Asthma
- Arthritis
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Hepatitis (B or C)
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Kidney disease
- Depression or Anxiety

### Key Message

- Chronic medical conditions are assessed on a case by case basis.
- Information, medical reports and individual history will be considered.
- The individual's treating practitioner is integral in providing valuable information to undertake the risk assessment.

- The department's medical provider uses this information and any other relevant information to determine the appropriate fire role category (A-H) the individual can perform.
- It is imperative that employees disclose all diagnosed medical conditions to their line manager and during their Fit for Fire medical assessment. A management plan can then be developed if necessary, if there is not one already in place.

