

Pre-Season Fitness Module: (6 weeks ‘ramping up’ with 2 weeks of transition to ‘fire season’ to total 8 weeks)

Objective: Provides training to transition from a post-season maintenance program in preparation of the upcoming Fire Season Fitness Module. Initial concentration is on building muscle strength with a moderate cardiovascular component and transition to later focus on muscle endurance with a slightly increased cardiovascular component (including both moderate and vigorous intensity). Flexibility is a continuous focus during all phases.

This is the phase to prepare the mind and body for the final transition to fire season. The goal is for each individual to be fully prepared (physically and mentally) for the first day of the fire season. Mental Preparation/Fitness is a key component during this phase.

Each exercise component will be broken down using the F.I.T. Principal. F = frequency, I = intensity, T = time.

- **Cardiovascular:** during the course of the module, cardiovascular capacity will increase through the implementation of both moderate and rigorous intensity conditioning (cross training) to minimize injuries. Cardiovascular training should be done 4-6 days a week (*frequency*) with a duration of 30-60 minutes of activity (*time*) at an intensity of 70-85% (*intensity*) of the established Target Heart Rate (THR), 1-2 days of rest is highly encouraged for maximum results. Those beginning the program should start at the minimal F.I.T. level of 4 days a week, 30 minutes at 70% THR.

During the final 2-weeks of the pre-season module, cardiovascular fitness should include vigorous intensity conditioning 5-6 times weekly in preparation for the fire season work. This should include cross-training (to mitigate overuse injuries and boredom) while increasing the frequency and intensity levels. These activities should include work specific activities such as pack hiking. A minimum of 1 day of rest is still recommended.

- **Muscle Strength:** Muscle strength is developed by lifting loads exceeding 70% of your maximal strength, and lifting them as many times as possible. The first 6 weeks of the Pre-Season Fitness phase will include concentration on increasing muscle strength. A baseline fitness level should have been maintained throughout the Post-Season and muscles should be prepared to increase the load at this time. Muscle strengthening exercises should be done a minimum of 2 days a week (*frequency*) initially (first 2 weeks for beginners) and increasing to 3 days a week. Each exercise should be done for 8-12 repetitions using 70-90% of maximum weight (*intensity*) for 1-3 sets (*time*) with a 1-2 minute rest interval between sets. **Be sure to allow 48 hours between strength workouts to allow for recuperation of muscles.**
- **Muscle Endurance:** Muscle endurance is developed when lifting a lighter load, less than 70% of maximal strength, and lifting repeatedly. The last 2 weeks of the Pre-Season phase will encourage a transition again from the now achieved muscle strength phase to concentrating on muscle endurance for work hardening. The F.I.T. Principal stays pretty much the same as used in the muscle strength program other than an increase in the repetitions and change in weight. The objective here is to start concentrating on elongating the muscle fibers, building muscle endurance, and preparing the muscles for long duration tasks such as digging handline. Muscle endurance exercises should still be

done 3-4 days a week (*frequency*) but now increasing the repetitions to 12-20 reps using 50-70% of maximum weight (*intensity*) for 1-3 sets (*time*) with 1 minute intervals between sets. Circuit training can also be considered for this phase.

During the initial 6 week pre-season phase, calisthenics (push ups, chin ups, tricep dips, abdominals, back extensions, calf raises) are recommended in conjunction with the muscle strength and endurance exercises as long as caution is taken as not to 'overuse' the muscle groups and still allow for adequate recovery time. **Be sure to allow 48 hours between strength workouts to allow for recuperation of muscles.**

- **Flexibility:** Stretching will always be one of the most important components of any exercise program. Flexibility includes a good pre-exercise warm up and post exercise stretching regime and cool down. An appropriate warm up should consist of a slow activity such as jogging to warm up the muscles and large, limbering stretches to further prepare the muscles for activity. After the workout is complete, the body should slow and cool down allowing the heart rate to recover and end with slow, static stretches of each muscle group used during exercise. Each stretch should be held for 20-30 seconds using good breathing techniques and no bouncing.
- **Rest:** The body needs 1-2 days of rest per week during the Pre-Season Module with light or no activity to be done other than something fun and enjoyable. This will allow the muscles to recuperate and help mitigate overuse injuries.