

Policy: AD-06-42

Policy Title: Basic Skills and Essential Functions

Policy Purpose: Identify and establish standardized basic skills for all employees

Implementation Date: 09/22/2006

Revision Date: N/A

TOWN OF WESTFIELD PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

BASIC SKILLS AND ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS POLICY

1. **Purpose** – Identify and establish standardized basic skills and essential functions for all Westfield Public Works Department (WPWD) employees. These basic skills and essential functions will establish the baseline for strength and endurance, agility and motor skills needed to perform WPWD different job tasks and positions safely and in accordance with established procedures. This essential function analysis will ensure accurate identification of essential and marginal functions, time required, physical activities, physical and cognitive requirements, equipment used and environmental surroundings.
2. **Scope** – This policy will be applicable for all job applicants and WPWD personnel. WPWD will employ this policy as a part of the hiring process for existing or newly created positions.
3. **Definitions**
 - a. Essential Functions: Those job tasks developed by WPWD and have been deemed necessary to accomplish a given work task.
 - b. To safely perform the essential functions of a job:
 - i. One considers the duration of the job task or risk for harm that the person is exposed to.
 - ii. The nature and severity of harm the person performing the job task is exposed to. Example may be digging a 3 foot long by 2 foot wide by 2 foot deep trench within 45 minutes; lifting a 100 pound storm sewer manhole cover with assistance from a pry bar lifting tool and moving it two feet within 5 minutes.
 - iii. The duration of the task is given (that is the time needed to perform the task), the nature of the harm is from lifting or twisting of the body to perform the task; the severity of harm is the potential for an injury ranging on a spectrum from a minor injury like a muscle sprain or strain to muscle or tendon tears, to a severe injury like a herniated lower back disk.
 - c. Reasonable Accommodation: Used if an individual is qualified for a job and meets the legal definition of being “disabled.”
 - d. Disabled: A person who possesses some form of mental or physical impairment.
 - e. Undue Hardship: Unreasonable burden placed on the employer who attempts to provide reasonable accommodation.

- f. Direct threat: Where an individual’s impairment will cause she or he to be a “direct threat” to the safety or health of himself/herself, other WPWD employees and/or the Westfield public at large. A significant risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of the individual or others.

4. Responsibilities

- a. The Director of Westfield Public Works Department will approve all department job functions, duties and responsibilities developed through the Safety Committee and the safety and loss control coordinator. These documents will be developed for all employees and used as a baseline for posting and hiring new personnel.

5. Procedures

◆ **Step 1: How to Identify Essential Job Functions**

The essential job functions will need to be included in the job description. This information will be important for determining if an applicant can perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

For example, let's look at the essential and marginal job functions of a receptionist position.

Receptionist Position

Essential job functions might include:

Answering the telephone and assisting callers.
Recording messages for department personnel.
Greeting clients and customers.

Marginal job functions might include:

Serving coffee to clients and customers.
Escorting clients to staff offices.

For this receptionist position, an applicant would need to be able to perform the essential job functions (duties) of this position with or without reasonable accommodation. The marginal or non-essential job functions are those that could be redesigned or reassigned to other employees, if necessary.

Whether or not a particular duty is considered marginal will depend on:

1. The importance of the duty;
2. It's frequency;

3. If there's sufficient staff to reassign the marginal duty to other employees;
4. If the marginal duty can be redesigned or performed in another way.

In other words, if the duty is viewed as important, the duty is performed with frequency, there isn't sufficient staff to reassign the marginal duty, and the duty can't be redesigned or performed in another way, the duty would be considered an *essential* function of the position.

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Step 2: Describe the Physical and Mental Performing Elements

When describing the essential function requirements of the position, identify and describe the physical and mental performing elements that are a necessary and integral part of the position. Try to be as specific as possible.

For example, specific physical and mental performing elements might be described as follows:

Physical Elements

Lifting and carrying 40 - 60 pounds;
Frequent bending, kneeling, and reaching;
Standing for long periods of time;
Climbing ladders;
Handling and assembling small parts, and so on....

Mental Performing Elements

Organizing and coordinating schedules;
Analyzing and interpreting data;
Calibrating precise measurements;
Problem-solving;
Communicating with the public;
Creating written communication;
Completing written work orders, and so on....

In addition to the physical and mental performing elements, equipment use and working conditions (and the frequency) should be identified as well. Examples might be as follows:

Equipment Use

Telephone - frequently
Small hand tools - occasionally
Forklift - rarely
Copier - occasionally
Van - rarely
Computer - frequently

Working Conditions

Indoor - frequently
Outdoor - rarely
Loud noise - occasionally
Cool temperatures - frequently
Exhaust fumes - occasionally

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Essential Job Functions Worksheet

The following worksheet is designed to help determine the essential and marginal functions of each job, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This worksheet should be completed before preparing the job description and initiating the hiring process. Essential function descriptions should contain the physical and mental elements of performing them. Qualifications and standards must be job-related and consistent with operating necessity.

When completing the Worksheet, consider these important questions:

Does the job exist to do this function?
How much time per week is spent doing this function?
What are the minimum qualifications and job standards?
What critical skills, experience, training, education, and/or license are needed?
What equipment is used to do this function? How frequently is the equipment used?
What are the physical elements of this function?
What are the mental elements of this function?
Can other current employees do this function if necessary?
Would taking this function from the job significantly change the job?
Would there be significant consequences if this function were not performed?
Could this function be redesigned or performed in another way?
Did the previous employee do this function?
Do people in similar positions elsewhere do this function?
Is this function essential, as opposed to marginal?

Essential Job Functions Worksheet

Position: _____

Location: _____

General purpose of this position:

Functions determined to be essential: (Fill in after completing worksheet)

Completed by: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

An **Essential Job Function** must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The reason the position exists is to perform this duty. Removing this function would fundamentally change this position.
2. A limited number of employees are available to do the function.
3. The person must have expertise to perform this duty.

List each function of the position and indicate whether it is an **essential** or **marginal** function.

E M

Functions

Mental Demands:

<input type="checkbox"/> problem-solver	R O F	other: _____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> make decisions	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> supervise	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> interpret data	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> organize	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> write	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> plan	R O F	_____	R O F

Working Conditions:

<input type="checkbox"/> indoor	R O F	other: _____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> outdoor	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> high temperatures	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> cold temperatures	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> loud noise	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> fumes	R O F	_____	R O F
<input type="checkbox"/> exposure to LCD screen	R O F	_____	R O F



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