



HEALTH + FITNESS PROGRAM



Guide to the Health Check Process

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1. Health Check Program

The implementation of a mandatory Health + Fitness Program for firefighters has remained a key deliverable under the FRNSW Safety Strategy. On 20 December 2017, the full bench of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission enacted the [Crown Employees \(Fire and Rescue NSW Firefighting Staff Death and Disability\) Award 2017](#) (the 'Award'). The Health Check + Fitness Drill Programs have been developed in accordance with Annexure A of the *Crown Employees (Fire and Rescue NSW Firefighting Staff Death and Disability) Award*.

The Health + Fitness Program consists of two components:

1. An annual Fitness Drill; and
2. A Health Check- undertaken periodically according to an age-based schedule.

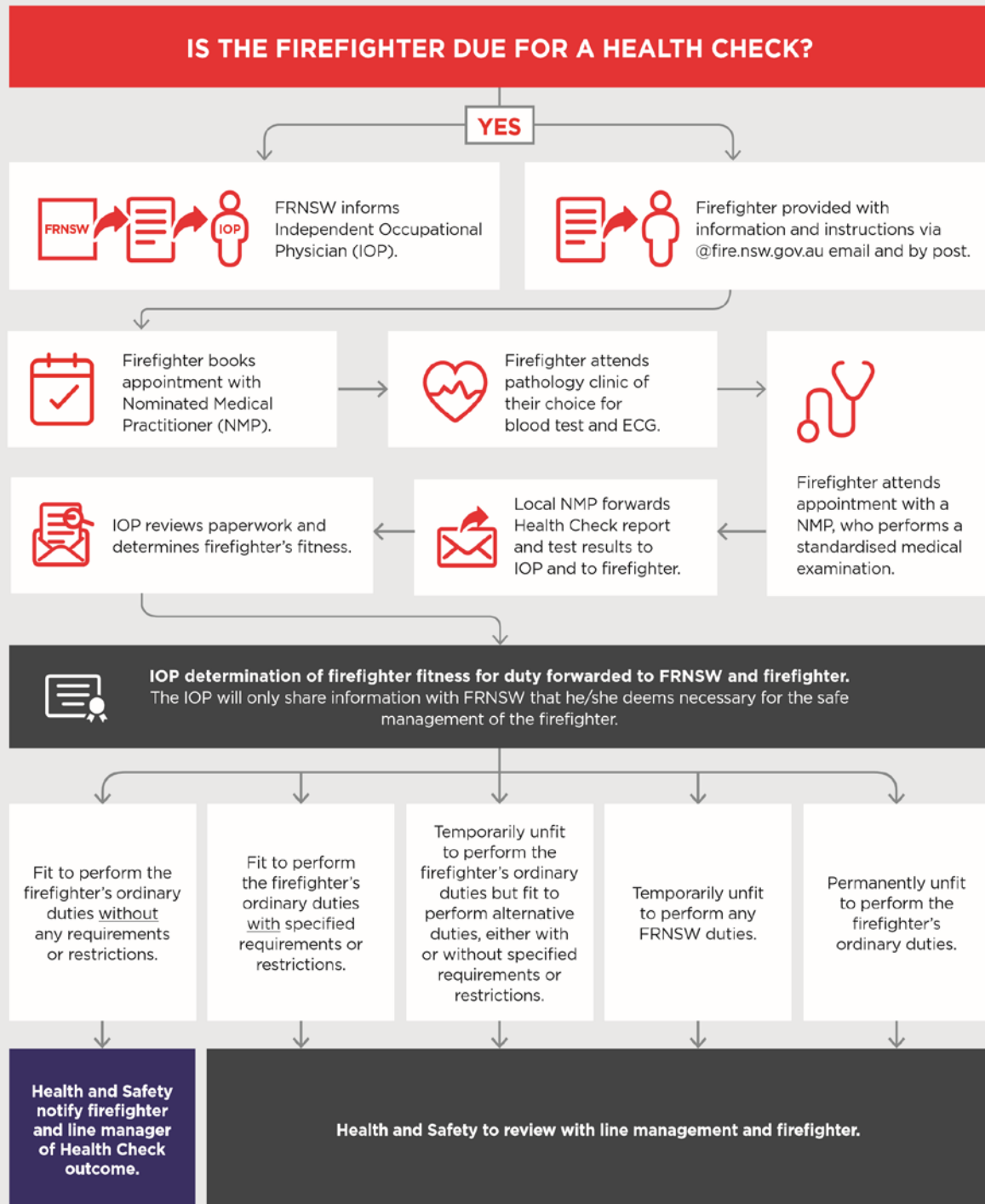
FRNSW currently has an operational workforce of approximately 6,800 firefighters and 20% of this workforce will undertake a Health Check each year, it will take approximately 5 years for all existing firefighters to undertake the Health Check component of this Program. Firefighters will have twelve-months to undergo a Health Check from the date of their Health Check notification. Generally, the frequency of Health Checks is:

Age Range	Health Check Frequency
Up to the age of 60	Every five (5) years
Age 60 to 66	Every three (3) years
Age 67 and above	Annually

A Firefighter will be informed that their Health Check is due in two ways:

- An email to their FRNSW email account with relevant documents and forms; and
- Hard copy notification of their Health Check, together with medical forms, sent to their home address, as shown in Employee Self Service (ESS).

1.1. Overview of the Health Check process



Pictured Above: FRNSW Health Check Flowchart

1.2. Why Health Checks?

Since the creation of the first *Crown Employees (Fire and Rescue NSW Firefighting Staff Death and Disability) Award* in 2003, FRNSW and the FBEU have agreed on the need for a compulsory Health + Fitness Program. The Health Check + Fitness Drill Programs have been developed in accordance with Annexure A of this Award.

These programs are intended to benefit firefighters and FRNSW by:

- promoting the health fitness of firefighters to assist them in meeting the occupational requirements of their job; and
- providing practical support, education and assistance to firefighters.

1.3. Health Check Notifications

A firefighter will be notified that their Health Check is due via an email to their Fire and Rescue NSW email account, with a hard copy of the medical forms posted to their home address.

A firefighter has 12 months from the date shown on the notification to complete their Health Check. During this 12-month period the firefighter, the business manager, zone commander or line manager, until the Health Check has commenced, will receive a reminder email at 6 months, 2 months, and 1 month. These emails are designed so that managers can support and encourage firefighters to undergo their Health Check within the required timeframe.

Once the Program goes live firefighters will be able to view their first scheduled Health Check date via Employee Self Service (ESS).

1.4. What is involved in the Health Check?

The focus of the Program is on health conditions that could result in sudden incapacity, impairment or pose an acute safety risk while at work. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- cardiovascular disorders, such as coronary heart disease or arrhythmias;
- respiratory disease, such as asthma;
- neurological disorders, such as epilepsy and stroke;
- diabetes causing hypoglycaemia;
- heat-related illness – the ability to regulate heat is a substantial issue for the cardiovascular system; and
- significant impairment of vision or hearing.

Generally, the assessment will consider how a medical condition may impact on firefighting and how firefighting may impact on a condition. Each firefighter will be assessed individually across a range of factors including the compatibility of the specific condition with the inherent requirements of their ordinary duties and how well the firefighter manages their condition.

To identify such conditions, the Health Checks will include:

- a Health Check report conducted by a local medical practitioner (nominated medical practitioner – NMP) of the firefighter's choosing;
- pathology testing including:
 - urinalysis;
 - twelve lead ECG;
 - cardiac risk profile;
 - spirometry (lung function), if recommended by the firefighter's nominated medical practitioner;
 - vision;
 - audiometry (hearing), if recommended by the firefighter's nominated medical practitioner; and
- other medical assessments as indicated by the Independent Occupational Physician.

1.5. Will I have to pay for my Health Check?

Medical appointments directly related to the Health Check will be paid by FRNSW. A firefighter can arrange payment for their pathology test and Nominated Medical Practitioner visit by contacting the Health Check Coordinator at healthcheckcoordinator@fire.nsw.gov.au at least 10 days before their appointment.

For detailed information on the payment process and arranging prepayments for medical appointments, please read the procedural guidelines available on the [Health Check Toolkit](#).

1.6. Are my Health Check results confidential?

The *Health Check Report* and your test results will be provided to the Independent Occupational Physician (IOP) in order to make a fitness for duty assessment. Your medical information will be kept confidential and will not be provided to FRNSW.

The IOP's *Advice for Fitness for Duty* form will be provided to FRNSW. No other information or advice concerning your health and fitness will be provided to FRNSW without your consent unless the IOP has advised specific requirements or restrictions. In this instance the IOP may provide only as much information as, in their professional opinion, necessary for FRNSW's safe management of you.

1.7. Will there be any drug or alcohol tests?

There is no drug or alcohol screening as part of the Health Check.

1.8. Why do my results need to be reviewed by an Independent Occupational Physician (IOP)?

The Award specifies that the results of the Health Check be assessed by an Independent Occupational Physician who will make a determination of fitness for duty based on a

firefighters Health Check results. The role of the Independent Occupational Physician in the Health Check process is to assess relevant clinical information against the firefighter's ordinary duties. The IOP will not share any medical information with FRNSW unless it is necessary for the safe management of that firefighter.

The Independent Occupational Physician for the Health Check Program is Unified Healthcare Group (UHG), their contact information is below.

Company Name	Unified Healthcare Group		
Designated Email address	healthchecks@uhg.com.au		
Designated Telephone number	1800 376 485	Designated Fax number	03 9692 7885

1.9. Can I be taken off duty if a health issue is identified during a Health Check?

If the IOP identifies a medical issue that puts your health and safety, or the health and safety of others at risk you may be stood down from your ordinary duties. In the majority of cases there will be no need for you to be taken off duty and in some cases work restrictions may be required. Health Check outcomes will be managed on a case by case basis and FRNSW will work with the firefighter to manage any identified issues wherever possible.

1.10. Who pays for the cost of treating a medical issue identified during a Health Check?

FRNSW will not cover the cost of treatment for non-compensable injuries or illness, however firefighters with a compensable injury or illness will be addressed through the Worker's Compensation system.

1.11. Next Steps:

- 1. Read your Health Check Pack carefully and review it to ensure that it correctly describes your ordinary duties.**

If you believe that any of the information contained in your Health Check Pack is incorrect then you should contact the FRNSW Health Check Coordinator via telephone on **(02) 9265 2800** or via email healthcheckcoordinator@fire.nsw.gov.au. before arranging to have your Health Check.

- 2. Choose your pathologist and your preferred doctor, who will become your Nominated Medical Practitioner (NMP) for this Health Check.**

You can choose any doctor to be your NMP, but if your pathologist or NMP is located further than 40km away then it is recommended that you seek prior approval from your Zone Commander. Prior approval is not compulsory, but you may be required to justify your choice of an NMP over 40km away and may not be paid for any extra distance that is later found to have been unnecessarily or unreasonably travelled.

3. Make an appointment with your NMP for your Health Check.

Make an appointment with your NMP, making sure you book an appointment long enough for the NMP to complete your Health Check report and conduct a physical examination.

4. Attend a pathology service to have your blood test and ECG.

Take the *Pathology and ECG Referral*, included in your Health Check, pack to a pathology service provider of your choosing. Attend the service provider between 5 and 30 days before your Health Check so that your NMP has the results to discuss with you. *Note point 2 about any distances to be travelled.*

Pathology testing must be completed prior to your NMP appointment, however, please ensure these tests are not conducted too far in advance that the pathology results become invalid. Where a firefighter waits more than 10 weeks between pathology testing and their NMP appointment, the firefighter may be required to redo their pathology to ensure results are current.

5. Take the following with you to your NMP appointment:

- Photo identification.
- Glasses if you need them.
- All medication you currently take or a list of your medications.
- Your Health Check Pack.

Your NMP will conduct a physical examination and discuss your general health and pathology test results with you. Your NMP will then complete your *Health Check Report*, which you will also be required to sign, and will provide you and the reviewing Independent Occupational Physician (IOP) with a copy of your *Health Check Report* and your test results.

6. Submit your claims for kilometre payments through the T&E system.

All claims relating to allowances and travel for Health Check appointments must be submitted through the T&E system. The T&E system was chosen as it allows for better privacy and confidentiality of firefighter health information.

Features of the T&E system include:

- travel expenses and allowances are directly claimed against the central Health Check Program cost centre (rather than the zone cost centre).
- automatic per-diem payment of Health Check attendance allowance via the payroll system.
- Automatic application of the 'official business rate' for kilometre reimbursement payable under the D&D Award.

If a firefighter is having difficulty claiming in the T&E system, please review the [T&E Guide](#), available via the [Health Check Toolkit](#). Alternatively, please contact the HR Help Desk via telephone on **(02) 9265 3900** or via email HR.Payroll@fire.nsw.gov.au.

It is important to note that a firefighter requires intranet/ remote access to claim in the

ESS/ T&E system.

7. After your NMP has submitted the Health Check Report:

The Independent Occupational Physician (IOP) might contact you or your NMP for further information about your health.

If the IOP contacts you: You may choose to answer all, some or none of the IOP's questions, however a lack of information could cause the IOP to assess you as unfit for duty. You may also ask the IOP for time to consult your NMP or Union before responding to the IOP's request for information and/or permission.

If the IOP contacts your NMP: The consent you are required to sign on your *Health Check Report* authorises your NMP and the IOP to exchange information about your health, but only to clarify something in your *Health Check Report*, or to complete incomplete or unanswered questions.

The Independent Occupational Physician will complete and submit the *Advice of Fitness for Duty* form to FRNSW, and at the same time provide a copy to you and your NMP.

FRNSW will arrange your allowances and travel payments upon receipt of the IOP's *Advice of Fitness for Duty* form.

8. Check Your FRNSW Email Account

The result of your Health Check outcome will be emailed to your FRNSW email account.

1.12. What should my Nominated Medical Practitioner do?

- At the commencement of the appointment your NMP should check your photo identification.
- Your NMP should then review and discuss your general health and pathology test results with you.
- Your pathology tests and your consultation help identify negative lifestyle habits and risks and allow for early intervention and management of medical conditions, gathering health statistics over your career to decrease the risk of injury and illness, work-related or otherwise.
- Complete the Health Check Report.
- Your NMP should use your test results and their examination to complete all sections of the *Health Check Report*. If your NMP believes an audiometry and/or spirometry test is warranted, but is unable to perform the test themselves, then they should refer you for this testing and make a second appointment with you to discuss your test results, and to complete the *Health Check Report*.
- Send the completed *Health Check Report* to the Independent Occupational Physician, signed on Page 4 by both you and the NMP. If applicable, they should also send your audiometry or spirometry test results.

The NMP should send their invoice for the consultation(s) addressed to:

Attention: Health Check Co-Ordinator

Address: Locked Bag 12, Greenacre NSW 2190

Fax Number: 02 9265 2986

Email: healthcheckcoordinator@fire.nsw.gov.au

1.13. Once the Health Check Report has been submitted:

Your NMP might be contacted by the Independent Occupational Physician (IOP) for further information and/or clarification about the NMP's findings and/or answers in your *Health Check Report*.

1.14. What will the Independent Occupational Physician do?

On receipt of the Health Check Report and the firefighters' Health Check results the IOP will:

1. Notify FRNSW, so that FRNSW can pay you for your Nominated Medical Practitioner, attendance and travel expenses (return kilometres at the official business rate); and
2. Review your *Health Check Report* and test results against the firefighter health standard.

If a medical issue is identified, the IOP will assess the risk against the firefighter's ordinary duties.

Not all health conditions are relevant to your work. Where a medical issue is identified the IOP must assess that risk against your ordinary duties to determine if it is safety critical or not.

The IOP may contact you to discuss your health and/or your ordinary duties, but you are not obliged to answer. You may agree to answer all, some or none of the IOP's questions, or may request time to consider the IOP's request, and to seek advice from your own doctor or Union, before providing the IOP with your answer.

The IOP should only ask you, or your NMP, about health information that is canvassed in the *Health Check Report*. No other health information should be sought without your permission.

If you or your NMP do not respond within a reasonable period then the IOP will complete the *Advice of Fitness for Duty* form based on the information available to them.

Note: where the IOP is unable to make a determination of fitness due to lack of information, then the firefighter may be declared temporarily unfit until all information is received to make a proper and full determination.

The IOP will send the completed Advice of Fitness for Duty form to FRNSW, you and your NMP.

The IOP must not provide FRNSW with any other information or advice concerning your health and fitness without your consent unless the IOP has advised specific requirements or restrictions, in which case the IOP may provide FRNSW only as much information regarding those requirements or restrictions as, in the IOP's professional opinion, is necessary for your safe management.

1.15. Health Check outcomes

There are five possible outcomes a firefighter can receive

1. Fit to perform the firefighter's ordinary duties without any requirements or restrictions
2. Fit to perform the firefighter's ordinary duties with specified requirements or restrictions
3. Temporarily unfit to perform the firefighter's ordinary duties but fit to perform alternative duties, either with or without specified requirements or restrictions
4. Temporarily unfit to perform any FRNSW duties
5. Permanently unfit to perform the firefighter's ordinary duties

When a Health Check outcome is 'fit to perform the firefighter's ordinary duties without any requirements or restrictions' the firefighter is notified directly via their FRNSW email.

If a firefighter's fitness for duty outcome is outcome 3-5, they will be notified by their Zone commander and/or the Health & Safety Branch, depending on any restrictions or accommodations required.

3. Where can I find more information?

You can find more information by:

- [*Crown Employees \(Fire and Rescue NSW Firefighting Staff Death and Disability\) Award 2017* \(the 'Award'\)](#).
- Reviewing the [Health Check Toolkit](#)
- Checking your FRNSW email account
- Reading the information sent to your postal address
- Checking the FRNSW Intranet and FBEU website (www.fbeu.net)
- Checking Station Notice Boards

4. Questions and feedback

If you have any enquiries relating to the Health Check process, please speak to your line manager or contact Health & Safety Branch on **(02) 9265 2800** or email HealthCheckCoordinator@fire.nsw.gov.au

If you are a member then you can also contact the FBEU on **(02) 9218 3444** or email healthchecks@fbeu.net