



Fire Department/ Emergency Management Agency

Antonio Burden, Fire Chief/EMA Director



DATE: October 31, 2025

TO: Anita Rookard, HR Director, Karen Sessoms HR Deputy Director

FROM: Antonio Burden, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Proposed Policy Revision to Personnel Policy Procedures Manual (PPPM) Section 800.011 Firefighter I - Recruitment Procedures

This letter serves to formally request an essential revision to the Personnel Policy Procedures Manual (PPPM), Section 800.011 Firefighter I - Recruitment Procedures, Subsection Hiring procedures #5. This change is critical to ensure the Augusta Fire Department (AFD) can maintain a competitive and efficient hiring pipeline for Firefighter Candidates.

Current Policy Language

The current language in PPPM Section 800.011, Subsection Hiring Procedures #5 reads as follows:

"Agility Test - Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) - All applicants who successfully complete the entrance exam will progress to the CPAT. A CPAT video will be made available to all applicants on the August website under Human Resources. Applicants will be provided the opportunity to practice the CPAT for a minimum of two weeks prior to the test date. Upon arriving for this test, applicants must sign a waiver to participate in the CPAT. With all forms submitted, the applicant is allowed to attempt the CPAT. Applicants are notified of their status (pass/fail) in this segment of the process before they leave the drill yard."

Proposed Policy Language

I propose replacing the specific, detailed procedure above with generalized language that grants the department the necessary flexibility to adapt to modern recruitment demands. The intent is to remove highly prescriptive steps from the PPPM, allowing the department's operational leadership to refine and execute recruitment strategies more efficiently.

"The Augusta Fire Department shall establish, maintain, and regularly update its comprehensive procedure for the selection and hiring of Firefighter Candidates, ensuring optimal efficiency, full compliance with all relevant labor regulations, and alignment with the evolving operational needs of the Department."

This new delegation requires the AFD to ensure that all established hiring procedures—including written examinations, physical testing standards, and interview protocols—are consistently applied, non-discriminatory, and fully compliant with all state and federal employment regulations. These detailed procedures will be centrally documented and reviewed annually by



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the Fire Chief and relevant HR liaisons to guarantee proper governance, transparency, and alignment with the department's commitment to recruiting skilled, diverse personnel.

This revision empowers the Fire Chief or their designee to formally approve and publish detailed hiring procedures (like the new APAT) through internal operational guidelines, rather than bureaucratic policy manual amendments. This separation of high-level policy (what must be done) from operational procedure (how it is done) is crucial for responsiveness and ensures our recruitment efforts remain aligned with the highest caliber of candidate acquisition.

Rationale for Change

This proposed change offers two primary benefits: flexibility and efficiency.

A diverse cross-section of Fire Department members was recently selected to examine current hiring procedures and determine their validity. The group unanimously agreed that the existing process is too lengthy and cumbersome, often taking up to a year to complete. This protracted timeline has led to the department losing out on potentially excellent candidates who opt for departments with faster hiring cycles.

Furthermore, the existing rigid language makes it difficult to adjust to evolving department needs and shifts in the labor market. The proposed generic language ensures the AFD can update the firefighter selection procedure more regularly without requiring formal policy manual revisions each time.

The specific, updated physical agility requirement, the Augusta Physical Agility Test (APAT) is outlined in the attached documentation. This new process is designed to be rigorous yet significantly more streamlined.

We request your review and approval of this proposed change to allow the Augusta Fire Department to submit to the governing body for approval, and implement a more effective and responsive hiring process. Please let us know if you require any additional information regarding the APAT procedure or the committee's findings.

Sincerely,