START HERE

Fireground Starter Week

Train for the task / Five sessions / Three equipment tracks

Every task starts where the last one left you

You climb with a load. At the top, there is a line to advance. Then you get low, move through a tight space, and carry equipment back out. This week trains the strength to move a load, the power to move it quickly, and the conditioning to do the next job while you are still breathing hard.

Choose one five-session week

Station Equipment (page 2) uses approved training hose, packs, props, and dummies. **Gym and Weights** (page 3) uses DBs, KBs, a barbell, and optional box or commercial gym equipment. **Austere** (page 4) works with bodyweight and a clear route, with an optional loaded pack. Run Sessions 1–5 in order. If shifts or sleep disrupt your week, resume where you left off.

Mandatory shoulder and hip warm-up

Every session: 3 min easy movement → 6 arm circles each way → 6 scapular push-ups → 5 upper-back rotations/side → 6 alternating 90/90 hip switches total → 5 adductor rock-backs/side → 4 reverse lunges with reach/side → 8 ankle rocks/side. Rehearse the first task. Before fast shuttles, build up over three progressively faster 20 yd efforts. Before jumps or loaded tasks, rehearse at lower intensity or load.

See page 6 for the warm-up movements, page 7 for zones and shuttles, and page 8 for common circuit drills.

How to run the hard rounds

Set up the stations first. Move directly from task to task, taking only the time needed for a clean setup. Check readiness at the low end of the suggested rest range. Go when you can repeat the work with speed and control. Add rest if speed falls or form breaks. If a loaded task still deteriorates, reduce the load. Stop a jump block if extra recovery fails to restore crisp landings.

Training disclaimer

This sample is for firefighters with an established training base. Use it alongside department procedures, skills training, and fitness requirements. Follow department rules for fire-service equipment. Keep on-air SCBA, charged-hose work, and live fire within supervised, department-approved training. The pack option uses a secured, approved training pack. The benchmark measures personal progress. Department standards govern hiring, certification, and return to duty.

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Station Equipment

Five sessions in order / Schedule around shifts and sleep

Dry training hose, training props, a dummy or sled, and approved packs.

Before every workout: Do the shoulder and hip warm-up on page 6.

Page 7 explains effort and shuttles. Page 8 shows how to do the circuit moves.

Day 1 | First Line

4 rounds.

20 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 40 sec fast stairs with a hose bundle

30 sec dry hose advance, then 20 sec low crawl

40 sec equipment carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 2 | Easy Cardio

45 to 55 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Run, walk briskly uphill, bike, or row.

Day 3 | Force Entry and Move

5 rounds.

Start each round with 3 crisp broad jumps in a clear landing area.

15 sec controlled, forceful strikes on an approved prop, then 30 sec backward dummy drag

30 sec hand-over-hand dry hose pull, then 30 sec equipment carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 4 | Easy Cardio

45 to 60 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Choose a pace that leaves you ready for Day 5.

Day 5 | Second Assignment

Do four 4-minute rounds.

30 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 60 sec loaded stairs

45 sec dry hose advance, then 30 sec low crawl

45 sec dummy drag or equipment carry, then 30 sec purposeful walk

Rest 60-90 sec between rounds. For the benchmark, use page 5.

If you slow down or lose form, rest longer. If it keeps happening during a loaded move, use less weight.

Pack-on option: Keep a secured, approved training pack on throughout Day 5. Replace the opening shuttle with a fast walk. Record pack status and load.

Gym and Weights

Five sessions in order / Schedule around shifts and sleep

Dumbbells, kettlebells, or barbell. A sled, box, or med ball adds options.

Before every workout: Do the shoulder and hip warm-up on page 6.

Page 7 explains effort and shuttles. Page 8 shows how to do the circuit moves.

Day 1 | First Line

4 rounds.

20 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 40 sec DB/KB reverse lunges or low step-ups

30 sec alternating DB/KB rows, then 20 sec low crawl

40 sec farmer carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 2 | Easy Cardio

45 to 55 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Run, walk briskly uphill, bike, or row.

Day 3 | Force Entry and Move

5 rounds.

Start each round with 3 crisp broad jumps in a clear landing area.

15 sec rotational med-ball throws or DB/KB push presses, then 30 sec backward sled drag or alternating reverse lunges

30 sec hand-over-hand sled pull or braced rows, then 30 sec heavy farmer carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 4 | Easy Cardio

45 to 60 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Choose a pace that leaves you ready for Day 5.

Day 5 | Second Assignment

Do four 4-minute rounds.

30 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 60 sec loaded step-ups or reverse lunges

45 sec sled pull or alternating DB/KB rows, then 30 sec low crawl

45 sec farmer carry, then 30 sec purposeful walk

Rest 60-90 sec between rounds. For the benchmark, use page 5.

If you slow down or lose form, rest longer. If it keeps happening during a loaded move, use less weight.

Barbell option: In Day 3, replace the sled drag or lunges with 5 barbell deadlifts at RPE 7, then proceed directly to the pull. Log the load and keep it repeatable.

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Austere

Five sessions in order / Schedule around shifts and sleep

Bodyweight and a clear route. A secured pack is optional.

Before every workout: Do the shoulder and hip warm-up on page 6.

Page 7 explains effort and shuttles. Page 8 shows how to do the circuit moves.

Day 1 | First Line

4 rounds.

20 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 40 sec fast stairs or alternating reverse lunges

30 sec prone pull-downs, then 20 sec low crawl

40 sec brisk uphill walk or pack carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 2 | Easy Cardio

45 to 55 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Run, walk briskly uphill, bike, or row.

Day 3 | Force Entry and Move

5 rounds.

Start each round with 3 crisp broad jumps in a clear landing area.

15 sec explosive incline push-ups or fast push-ups, then 30 sec alternating reverse lunges

30 sec prone pull-downs, then 30 sec brisk uphill walk or pack carry

Rest 45-75 sec after each round. Take longer if you need it.

Day 4 | Easy Cardio

45 to 60 min at a pace where you can speak in full sentences. Choose a pace that leaves you ready for Day 5.

Day 5 | Second Assignment

Do four 4-minute rounds.

30 sec hard unloaded shuttle, then 60 sec stair climb or alternating reverse lunges

45 sec prone pull-downs, then 30 sec low crawl

45 sec brisk uphill walk or pack carry, then 30 sec purposeful walk

Rest 60-90 sec between rounds. For the benchmark, use page 5.

If you slow down or lose form, rest longer. If it keeps happening during a loaded move, use less weight.

Scoring: Count prone pull-down reps and record walking distance. Log pack load when used. These are separate benchmarks from loaded pulls and carries.

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Second Assignment Benchmark

Record repeatable output / Compare results within your track

Test setup

Choose one track and lock in the exercise options. Record the step height or stair route, implement loads, drag surface, and whether a pack was worn. Use the same shoulder and hip warm-up on every test. Have all implements in place before the clock starts.

Run four work blocks

Use the Session 5 sequence for your track. Each block has four minutes of scheduled task time. Use the same brief transitions on each test and take **60 sec between blocks**. If you need extra rest or change a load, log it and use the result as a training baseline. End a task if you can no longer perform it with control.

Score output by station

Record steps or lunge reps, pull reps or distance, and carry or drag distance for each round. Divide round-four output by round-one output for each task. For example, 27 yd ÷ 30 yd = **90% of first-round pull output**. Keep the units separate. Optional measures include final effort rating, peak HR, and time in zones during the main work.

Prefer to log in Excel

Request an Excel version through shawndassie.com. Mention Fireground Starter Week and your equipment track so we know which workout and benchmark you want to track.

Research behind the design

A self-paced firefighter air-management course averaged 22.8 min. Using age-predicted maximum heart rate, participants spent about 92% of course time in Zones 3–5. Separate task testing showed that hose running, climbing, carrying, and casualty evacuation placed different demands on firefighters. The four-block test and its scoring are THP programming choices. Use them for personal comparison.

Firefighter air-management course and time in heart-rate zones (2023)

Siddall et al. Firefighter task demands and cardiorespiratory standards (2016)

Nuuttila and Matomäki et al. Low-intensity endurance training review (2026)

NIOSH. Safe Use of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus for Firefighters (2026)

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Shoulder and Hip Mobility

Start / Movement / Finish

Begin with 3 minutes of easy walking or jogging. Work through the drills below in order. Use a controlled range you can own and rehearse the first training task afterward.

Arm circles | 6 each direction

Start: Stand tall with arms out to the sides. **Movement:** Make smooth circles from the shoulders. Start small and gradually widen. **Finish:** Reverse direction, then lower your arms.

Scapular push-up | 6 reps

Start: Set up in a high plank with hands below shoulders. Use a wall or stable bench for an incline. **Movement:** Keep elbows straight as your chest lowers slightly between your shoulders. Push the surface away to spread your shoulder blades. **Finish:** Return to the high position with your trunk steady.

Quadruped upper-back rotation | 5 per side

Start: Start on hands and knees. Put one hand behind your head. **Movement:** Rotate that elbow down, then up as your upper back turns. Keep your hips square. **Finish:** Return to the starting position and switch sides after five reps.

90/90 hip switch | 6 alternating reps total

Start: Sit with knees bent and feet wider than hips. Use hands behind you for support as needed. **Movement:** Let both knees rotate to one side toward a 90/90 position. Bring them through center and rotate to the other side. **Finish:** Settle briefly on each side. Each landing counts as one rep.

Adductor rock-back | 5 per side

Start: Start on hands and knees, then extend one leg to the side with the foot supported. **Movement:** Move your hips back toward the bent-leg heel until you feel your inner thigh. **Finish:** Return hips over the bent knee and switch sides after five reps.

Reverse lunge with reach | 4 per side

Start: Stand tall with feet under your hips. **Movement:** Step back into a controlled lunge and reach overhead within a comfortable range. **Finish:** Drive through the front foot to stand, lower your arms, and switch legs.

Ankle rock | 8 per side

Start: Stand in a short split stance facing a wall, front heel down. **Movement:** Drive the front knee forward over your toes while the heel stays planted. **Finish:** Return to the start and repeat, then switch legs.

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Training Zones and Shuttles

Use heart rate for context and pace the work by effort

Five heart-rate zones

The firefighter study cited on page 5 used the bands below as percentages of age-predicted maximum heart rate. Watch settings and threshold-based zones can differ. Use the talk cues and effort ratings to run the workout. Treat the percentages as study reference points.

Z1 | 50–60% Very easy. Warm-up, cooldown, and easy walking.

Z2 | 60–70% Easy and steady. You can speak in full sentences. This is the goal for Sessions 2 and 4.

Z3 | 70–80% Moderate to hard. Conversation becomes shorter.

Z4 | 80–90% Hard. Speaking is limited to a few words at a time.

Z5 | 90–100% Very hard. Brief peaks can occur during demanding work.

How to use zones in this program

Long Z2: Use a pace you can sustain while speaking in full sentences. Walk an uphill section if needed. **Hard rounds:** Open hard at a pace you can repeat. Log output and optional heart rate across rounds. Use the whole work block to review heart rate, and judge a short shuttle by pace, control, and distance.

Timed unloaded shuttle

Start: Mark two lines 10–20 yd apart on a flat, clear, nonslip lane. Use the same distance on retests. Begin behind one line. **Movement:** Accelerate to the far line. Ease into the turn over the final steps, cross the line, turn under control, and accelerate back. Repeat for the prescribed 20 or 30 sec. **Finish:** At the timer, slow under control, record full lengths plus any partial distance, and move into the next station. Use a fast walk for the pack-on option.

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Common Circuit Movements

Set up the lane and equipment before the work block

Broad jump

Start: Stand with feet about hip-width in a clear landing lane. **Movement:** Hinge slightly, swing your arms, and jump forward. **Finish:** Land softly on both feet, stabilize, and reset before the next jump.

Stair climb or step-up

Start: Use clear stairs or a stable low step. Hold any load securely before starting. **Movement:** Plant the whole foot and drive up. On a step, alternate the lead leg. **Finish:** Step down under control. Count completed ascents or step-ups.

Dry hose advance or rope pull

Start: Lay out an approved dry line or sled rope in a clear lane. Keep feet outside loops. **Movement:** For an advance, walk the dry line forward with steady steps. For a rope pull, stay braced and pull hand over hand. **Finish:** Stop at time, set down the line, and step clear before changing stations.

Low crawl

Start: Start on hands and knees or in a low hands-and-feet position. **Movement:** Move opposite hand and leg in a steady rhythm, keeping hips low. **Finish:** Slow down at the marker, stand with control, and clear the lane.

Equipment or farmer carry

Start: Stand between two implements or square up to the equipment. Brace and lift with control. **Movement:** Walk tall with short, steady steps. Use controlled turns. **Finish:** Slow to a stop and set the load down before moving on.

Backward dummy or sled drag

Start: Use approved handles or a harness and check the path behind you. **Movement:** Take short backward steps while keeping the load moving smoothly. **Finish:** Stop under control and release the handles once the load is settled.

Prone pull-down

Start: Lie face down with arms extended and forehead near the floor. **Movement:** Draw elbows toward your ribs while keeping your ribs and hips down. **Finish:** Reach forward again under control. Count one full pull and reach as one rep.