

Fellow Airmen:

Chief Cody and I get a lot of questions about the physical fitness test (PFT). To ensure we fully understood the issues folks were concerned about, we conducted a comprehensive review of the Fitness Program. The one thing that was crystal clear to both of us when we finished is that we have a tremendous program that has fundamentally changed the AF's overall fitness level over the past few years. So I'll tell you right up front that the PFT itself is not going to change. But even the best program can be improved upon, so we are making changes in four different areas to enhance the overall program.

The first change involves the abdominal circumference (AC) portion of the test. We use the AC measurement to assess an Airman's body composition, which is a key component of fitness. Because the AC measurement is integrated into our fitness test, DoD approved a permanent waiver to the DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Program, making us the only service not required to have a separate weight management program requiring annual body mass index measurements and assessments for every Airman.

One of the two concerns Chief Cody and I hear most is that there are Airmen who pass every component of the PFT except the AC, but fail the AC because they have a very large, thick body type or are very muscular. To put this in perspective, since we implemented the PFT, only 348 of ~1.3 million Airmen tested resulted in an Airman failing the AC portion and passing all the others with a passing composite score of 75 or higher. That's 0.03%...so this is an unusual occurrence. But, in the future, if an Airman fails the AC portion of the test, and passes each of the other three components, we'll measure that Airman using the Body Mass Index (BMI) taping guidance in DoD instructions. If the Airman meets the DoD BMI standard, they pass the PFT.

Chief Cody and I also hear about the "many" Airmen who have been kicked out of the Air Force for AC-only failures. The fact is that since we started the new Fitness Program, only 76 airmen have been separated from the Air Force for failing only the AC portion of the test multiple times. That equates to 0.006% of the Airmen tested. It's certainly difficult for the airmen involved, but it really doesn't happen that often.

We're making three other modifications designed to improve the program. First, we're realigning the fitness appeal process back to Wing Commanders. Second, passing standards are being adjusted for Airmen who can only test on one component of the Fitness Assessment, and third, we're changing and simplifying the walk test.

All these changes will be effective 1 October 2013, and the A1 will send detailed implementation guidance to the field shortly.

The second comment Chief Cody and I hear most frequently is that we need to rethink how we document fitness performance in performance reports. We are doing that as part of a larger effort to examine the performance report itself, along with the promotion system it supports. We'll give you the results of that study in the near future.

I believe we have DoD's best designed, best run Fitness Program, and as a result, we have a force ready for any mission our nation asks us to execute. I'm extremely proud of how far we've come with our fitness culture! Thanks for your personal commitment to staying in shape!

As always, thanks for all you do! See you in the gym!



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