Frequently Asked Questions

1. What classes require Medical Clearance for students?
   1. Firefighter I
   2. Firefighter II
   3. Firefighter Survival and Rescue
   4. Hazardous Materials Technician
   5. Confined Space Rescue
   6. Swiftwater Rescue

2. What is meant by "Medical Clearance"?
   Medical clearance is written verification from a physician or other licensed health care professional that a student is medically capable of performing the required physical duties. Forms will be provided that you can take to your physician or other licensed health care professional that list, in detail, the physical duties so he/she can more easily make this determination.

3. Can I utilize a physician's assistant or someone other a medical doctor to provide medical clearance?
   Yes, in addition to a medical doctor, other examples of licensed health care professionals include: doctor of osteopathic medicine (D.O), nurse practitioners, and physician assistants.

4. I get annual physicals examinations from my fire service organization. Is this sufficient?
   Medical clearance can be obtained in three (3) main ways:
   1. Departmental physicals - For those students who currently undergo regular physical examinations within their own fire service organization, the Information Release form (Appendix B Part 1) and the Verification form (Appendix B Part 2) may be utilized. Appendix B authorizes the student's department to notify the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute regarding their physical. Appendix C Part 2 is
completed by the fire service organization and confirms that the student has had a physical examination and been determined to be fit for duty.

2. Personal physicals - Students may have their personal physician or other licensed health care professional complete the Medical Release form in Appendix C. This form describes the physical duties for the student and then has the physician or other licensed health care professional attest that the student is medically capable of performing these duties.

3. Medical Questionnaire - Students who do not undergo regular fire service organization physicals or prefer not to initially have their own personal physician complete the Medical Release form in Appendix C, may first complete an on-line Medical Questionnaire described in Appendix D. Following the completion of this confidential questionnaire, it will be reviewed under the direction of MFRI's medical director. The review will result in one of two findings: 1) the student is authorized to participate in the class; or 2) additional evaluation is required by the individual's personal physician. If the individual is required to have further evaluation by their personal physician, Appendix C must be completed before the student is authorized to participate.

5. I had a physical exam last year from my personal physician. Is that still good?
Your medical clearance must not be more than three (3) years old from the beginning of your class, provided your health care condition has not changed. If you are seeking medical clearance from a physical that was conducted some time ago, you will still need to have the Medical Release form in Appendix C completed by your physician or other licensed health care professional. It will be up to your personal physician or other licensed health care professional as to whether he/she will sign the form based upon a physical that was performed sometime ago.

6. Am I expected to have medical clearance on the first day of my class?
No, but you must have it prior to the first session within the curriculum that entails the use of self-contained breathing apparatus or hazardous or strenuous duties. Your instructor can tell you exactly when that will occur. But don't delay. You should obtain your medical clearance as soon as possible.

7. Will I be reimbursed for the expense of any exam necessary to obtain my medical clearance?
Maybe - first, you must have undergone an examination as a result of a review of your medical questionnaire and have documentation that provides proof of your payment. Second, you must successfully complete the class.
Finally, you must complete a form that attests that your request was a valid expenditure which will not be reimbursed by any other source (insurance, etc.). If approved, you may be approved to be reimbursed for up to $75.00.

8. I am currently obtaining medical clearance to take Firefighter I and plan to take Firefighter II next year. Will I have to get medical clearance again for my Firefighter II class?
Your medical clearance must not be more than three (3) years old from the beginning of your class, provided your health condition has not changed.

9. If I decide to seek my medical clearance by completing the Medical Questionnaire, how do I access it?
The Medical Questionnaire is on-line on the "Student's Zone" located on the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute's web site. Access the link: www.mfri.org/studentzone

10. I do not have access to the internet at home to complete the Medical Questionnaire. Do I have any other options?
Yes, internet access should be available at a number of local locations. First, check access at the fire service organization where you are a member. Free public access to the internet is also available at local libraries.

11. Is there any guidance for completing the Medical Questionnaire?
Yes. First, you must answer all questions honestly. If you fail to do so, you may be prohibited from participating in future MFRI classes. Next, you need to make yourself available to MFRI medical staff who may need to contact you for follow-up question(s) as a result of your responses.

12. Who do I contact if I have questions on the Medical Questionnaire?
Feel free to contact medical@mfri.org for any questions.

13. Who sees my responses to the questions on my Medical Questionnaire? Are my responses confidential?
Yes, your responses are very confidential. The only person reviewing them will be specially trained and authorized medical personnel at MFRI.
14. What happens after I complete my Medical Questionnaire?
You will receive a form illustrated in Appendix E indicating that you are "approved" or "disapproved" for participation in classes. If you are approved, take the form and give it to your instructor. If you are not, you will be instructed to take the form illustrated in Appendix C to your personal physician or other licensed health care professional. This form lists the specific duties you will be expected to perform so he/she can better understand the demands of your class. At that point, it will be strictly up to your doctor or other licensed health care professional as to whether you will be medically cleared to take the class. If you are, bring the signed form illustrated in Appendix C which will be signed by your physician or other licensed health care professional to class and give it to your instructor. It is important that your medical clearance forms be provided to your instructor prior to the first session within the curriculum that entails the use of self-contained breathing apparatus or hazardous or strenuous duties. Your instructor can tell you exactly when that will occur.

15. If, after a review of my medical questionnaire, I am required to seek further evaluation from a physician or other health care provider, where do I go? I am relatively new to the area.
The specific physician or other health care professional that you select is entirely up to you. However, keep in mind that a variety of locations complete the type of physical exam that can lead to your medical clearance such as clinics within drug store chains. Your training coordinator will have a list of alternatives in the area. Call the regional training office or ask your instructor for this list.

16. What happens if my medical condition changes after I receive medical clearance?
You must advise your instructor of any change(s) to your physical condition that may affect your ability to use self contained breathing apparatus or conduct strenuous or hazardous training. This is very important!