

Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) What is it? How does it compare to a Physical Ability Testing (PAT)?

Functional Capacity Evaluation

The FCE was developed to determine activities of daily living following an *extended period of medical leave due to an impairment and/or disability*. In recent years modifications have been made to accommodate for return work evaluations concerning industrial injuries, however, these are injured workers with no pre-injury evaluation against a defensible validation of the essential job task demands.

The PAT via a Job Task Analysis (JTA) *is job/task specific* defining the essential physical demands of the job/task, developing a test battery that is EEOC/ADA compliant measuring physiological, psychological and endurance over an extended period of time taking in consideration the frequency and duration of task performed during the shift.

Over the past thirty years, many researchers have attempted to develop functional capacity evaluation instruments. Matheson provided one of the earliest examples in 1984. Isernhagen followed in 1988 with the suggestion that a multidisciplinary team should assist in determining a person's functional capacity. Hart in 1994 also advocated a physician and therapist working in conjunction to assess a patient's resulting impairment. There are approximately 10 different types of commonly used functional capacity evaluations. These include the Blankenship, Ergos Work Simulator and Ergo-Kit variation, the Isernhagen Work System, Hanoun Medical, Physical Work Performance Evaluation (Ergoscience), WEST-EPIC, Key, Ergos, ARCON, and Assess Ability. The Isernhagen System demonstrated the greater reliability and validity of all the listed systems. The preponderance of research data and protocols for the most part are *based on persons with pre-existing disability and impairments*.

The Functional Capacity Evaluation was developed to evaluate persons suffering from a *pre-disposed disability and impairments*, the majority of patient's disability were chronic, mainly chronic back pain. The FCE was developed to provide a measurement of physical, physiological, behavior, activities of daily living and psych-social impairments. The FCE is also a rehab tool to measure chronic patients function before rehabilitation and after the rehab is completed.



In order for us to assess function, ideally we would like an instrument that can reliably measure the functional physical ability of a person to perform a work specific or activities of daily living series of tasks. Without a specific job task analysis you have no data to measure performance against for validity, reliability and prediction of performance over an extended period of time in concert with the essential physical demands. Unfortunately, the FCE does not have reliability and validity data from normative non-impaired non-disabled population, only compares performance data from normative tables, not specific to the individual being tested or the tasks they are required to perform; unlike the PAT, the tasks are quantified per individual and tested against the company developed standards as quantified by the JTA.

The major limitation of the FCE is that there is no quantifiable employment or activities of daily living measures prior to a disability or is it task specific for each job position defining and measuring the essential demands. To establish quantifiable measurements, a Job Task Analysis (JTA) is necessary. The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures outline the information that is required to demonstrate that a test battery is a valid selection instrument for EEOC and ADA documentation.

Basically, there are three points that need to be demonstrated to avoid adverse impact:

1. There has been a thorough job analysis
2. The tests in the battery are highly related to the job requirements
3. There is clear evidence that the tests are predictive of job performance

The strongest form of evidence is a statistical validation study that demonstrates a relationship between test scores and job performance measures for the specific jobs. The key here is the development of the test battery design. The PAT has a tester certification for individuals to test according to the company's quantified test battery per the job JTA. The PAT algorithm can detect an error in the tester's protocol rendering the test invalid, all to protect the company and candidate. The validation of a company's employee performance is monitored yearly as well as the test battery and at five years an onsite job re-analysis.

The pass/fail decision is rendered through a third party of experts transferring your legal liability. To determine Pass/Fail, the testing data is entered into a comparative algorithm inclusive of the test battery. Data is sorted to ensure the testing protocol is adhered and the results rendered.

Many Occupational Medical Clinics (OMC) provide testing, however, legal counsel has cautioned these clinics and rehab centers their testing protocol may not be defensible. Are the OMC tests validated by longitudinal scientific studies? Are they job specific via a job task analysis, in the event of litigation? Will the OMC defend their test protocol? Has the OMC actually defended their test protocol in litigation? The PAT test battery and test protocol has prevailed every litigation challenge. Does the OMC have thirty (30) plus years of experience performing physical ability testing and data collection and EEOC, ADA, CAAS, compliant.

The Safety Solutions PAT program works as intended. Workers' compensation injuries and personnel costs are reduced on average of 47% with implementation of ergonomically based physical ability tests. Testing has shown to decrease new hire injury rates by 20-47%. Testing has shown to decrease employee turnover by as much as 21%. Studies demonstrate the job-specificity and predictability of the test battery by showing that applicants who failed the test experienced 2.5 greater injury rates than those who passed the test.

The ideal post-injury rehabilitation is the test battery protocol initially used to test the candidate as the baseline measure to gain pre-injury status.

The difference is clear why you will chose the Safety Solutions Physical Ability testing over a FCE. The test battery methodology and testing protocol is validated since 1989 on performing over a 1,000,000 tests to date in may occupational fields, the test protocol are legally defensible and provides documentation to address EEOC requirements, 24 hour or less turnaround of test performance.....and do not forget about the cost savings when your Safety Solutions certified testers perform the testing in-house and still maintain the transfer of liability when test battery is challenged.

To learn more about Safety Solutions HR Solutions, Physical Ability Testing, Job Specific Descriptions and Programs go to www.safsol.com