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10 BEST

A stylized silhouette of a firefighter in a dark blue uniform and helmet, set against a background of orange and red flames. The firefighter is holding a green fire hose.

Exercises for Fire Rescue Athletes

By Aaron Zamzow, BS CPT

SPECIAL REPORT

Courtesy of www.FireRescueFitness.com

Thanks for joining the Fire Rescue Fitness Nation. Please use the information in this special report. The time is now to make a positive change in our industry. Eat right, exercise and set an example for the community. I hope this program can help you obtain a higher level of fitness and get you “Fit for Duty.”

Stay Safe and “Train like a life depends on it.”

-Aaron Zamzow



Disclaimer:

This information in this report is for education purposes only. It is not medical advice and is not intended to replace the advice or attention of health-care professionals. It is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All recommendations in this book are not medical guidelines but are for educational purposes only. Be aware that all forms of exercise and stretching pose some inherent risk. The author advises readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their own limitations. Before practicing the exercises, activities, and stretches in this book, please be sure that your equipment is well-maintained and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, skill and fitness. Consult your physician before beginning or making changes in your diet or exercise program, for diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries, and for advice regarding medications.

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The Best 10 Exercises for Fire Rescue Athletes

I created the “The 10 Best Exercises (there are more, but I had to start somewhere) for Fire Rescue Athletes to address the issue that a majority of the fitness programs seen and used in firehouses (and in most gyms) don’t address --the “on the field” requirements of the job. Functional core strength, power, and endurance are critical to the firefighter, EMT and paramedic (fire rescue athletes). In order to effectively train for our job these components need to be addressed. Unfortunately, many of the traditional *weight-lifting machines seen in most firehouses do not ‘functionally’ address the physical challenges fire rescue athletes need.* In addition, the body-building, P90X, and Insanity training programs typically used by the public-at-large aren’t the best either. Why? Fire rescue athletes must use their entire body at any given moment during their job performance. Multi-joint, whole-body exercises utilizing varying loads, muscular contraction speed and duration will benefit the fire rescue athlete far more than bodybuilding-style training, or traditional weight-lifting machines. This list may surprise you, it contains some not-so-common exercises but I assure you each one of these 10 have specific application to the movements on a fire ground. Most importantly they all support and hopefully will help you understand that in order to move efficiently as a fire rescue athlete you need to understand that all *movement starts from the core.*

This is not an all encompassing list, I’m already working on the “next 10 best” article. You will notice that some of the numbers aren’t exercises per say but fitness categories. Take a look and make sure [your fitness program](#) (if not, [click HERE](#)) contains most if not all of these exercises and components. I also included a ton of useful links to videos and workouts to help you incorporate these into your own workouts.



1. **Plank (s)**—It's no surprise that the first exercise in this list is a core exercise. Back injuries are the number one reason firefighters and medics go on early disability so it's imperative that as a fire rescue athlete you focus on strengthening the core. The plank exercise requires no equipment and is an incredible



exercise for improving core strength, endurance, and power. As mentioned previously, core

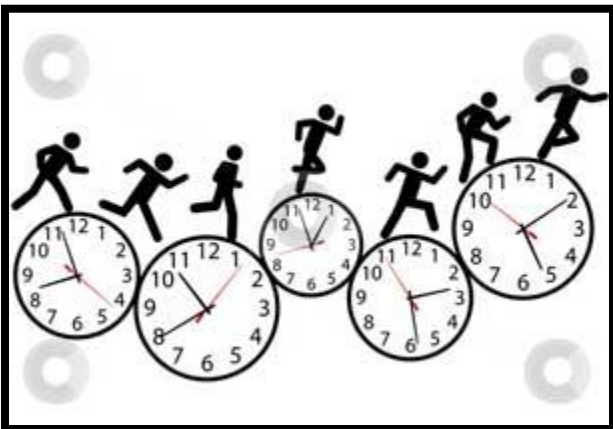


strength is integral for the fire rescue athlete, as all movement occurs around the core. The plank will increase core efficiency allowing the body to have greater control and stability. All fire rescue athletes should include some version of the plank in their

workout program. Use multiple positions: plank, side plank, and bridge.

2. **Intervals**-- The purpose of any fire rescue athlete's cardiovascular program is to help them work more efficiently under the stresses encountered every day on the job, whether it on the fire or rescue scene. Intervals raise our maximal oxygen uptake (VO₂ max), which, simply put, is the greatest amount of oxygen our bodies can use during maximum effort.

Athletes that can work longer before they reach their VO₂ max will be able to accomplish



more on the fire ground. Intervals also help the body to more efficiently flush muscles of lactic acid and more efficiently burn fat. The bottom line: We want to build a cardiovascular training program that enables us to work longer and harder with less physical pain when

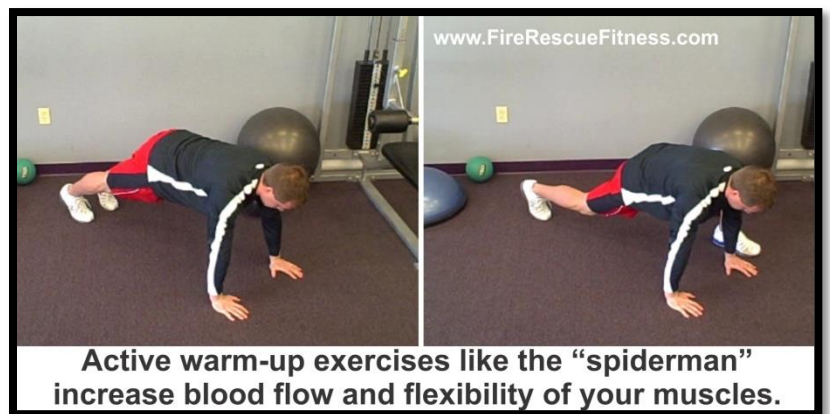
it really counts. Since heart-rates can rise dramatically with mental stress and



physical work, the firefighter (fire rescue athlete) must prepare their body for this kind of physiological load by using a well-designed cardiovascular program. It is recommended that, after the initial accommodation to a steady-state aerobic training program (about 30 to 60 days), the firefighter should progress to high-intensity interval training. Interval training in which the intensity is intermittently raised for hard work and then lowered for recovery. This mimics the metabolic demands of most firefighting duties. [Click Here for some good interval options.](#)

3. Active Warm-ups. These are slow, controlled, easy movements that increase blood flow and flexibility of muscles. There is a value in the traditional stretch and hold, or static stretching if executed properly, but only when done *after* a workout. Each one of your workouts should start with a short cardiovascular exercise followed by specific active

stretching movements. In the past you may have skipped this part, but I assure you these exercises will help strengthen and even tone your body. Nothing else provides so much value in so little time. The warm-ups prepare the body for movement, boosts heart

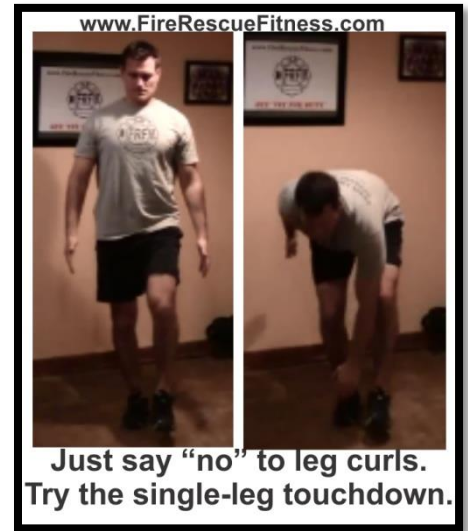


rate, blood flow to the muscles, and core temperature. These movements also improve the function of your nervous system. The main goal of this component is to improve the long-term mobility and flexibility of your muscles. Active warm-ups not only increase flexibility of your muscles before the workout they also help them remain flexible for the rest of the day. Here's why that's important: let's say you're working on the fire ground and your foot slips. How well your body reacts to that slip depends on your muscle efficiency and



balance. The warm-ups, switch on your body's small muscles, which helps with balance and your muscle efficiency. It prepares your body for random, quick movements by fine-tuning its nerves and feedback mechanisms. [Click Here to see some videos of these exercises.](#)

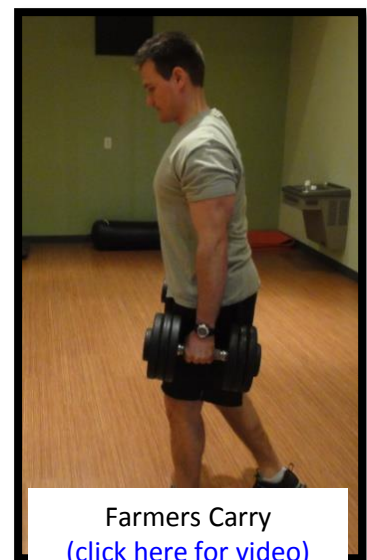
4. Single leg touchdowns-The single-leg touchdown is one of the most natural athletic movements: You bend at the knees while balancing on one leg. So even if you've never done the exercise, you'll find yourself in similar positions in and around the firehouse. Typically injuries and chronic pain are from weak stabilizing and decelerating muscles including the hamstrings, glutes and the muscles just above the knee cap on the inside of the leg. The single leg touchdown strengthens all of these muscles and can greatly help manage and prevent chronic knee and back pain. How do you do it? Balance on your right leg with your knees slightly bent, slowly bend your knee to lower your body toward the floor while reaching toward the outside of your right foot with your left hand. Push through your heel and squeeze your glutes to return to the starting position. [Click Here to see a video of the single leg touchdown.](#)



5. Farmers carry- We as fire rescue athletes are generally moving in unbalanced positions. Whether its climbing a ladder, pulling hose, or ventilating, we are usually in an unbalanced, split stance. Therefore one area of focus should be the deep balancing muscles of the core. These muscles play an important role in holding and stiffening the pelvis to prevent it from bending and can be challenging to train in normal bi-lateral lifting and pulling exercises.



In addition, we as fire rescue athletes are routinely required to carry heavy loads and equipment. The farmers carry addresses both of these issues, it engages the core and at the same time improves grip strength. It's a simple movement, grab some fairly heavy objects, engage the core by bracing your abs and slowly walk (chest up, good posture). The longer and heavier you go the more you challenge the core and your grip.



Farmers Carry
[\(click here for video\)](#)

6. Prisoner Squats- This exercise targets your quadriceps. It also more importantly, activates your core and every other muscle in your lower body, including your glutes, hamstrings, and calves. Prisoner squats not only strengthen those muscles, but also strengthen the tendons and ligaments that connect them. In addition to their strength-building benefits, squats also teach you core stabilization, which is important for almost any movement on the fire ground. Also known as the bodyweight squat, the prisoner squat is a great exercise you can do without any equipment.

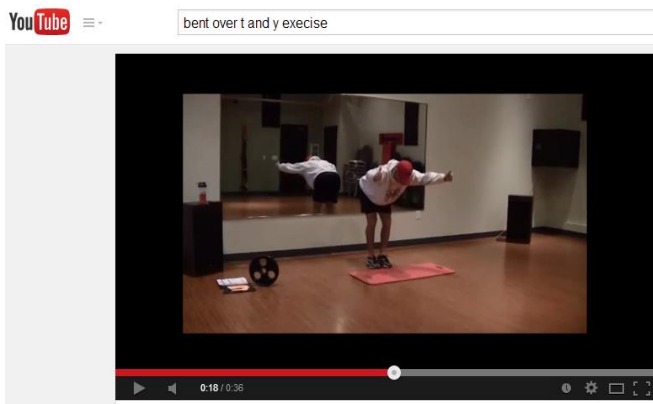
Here's how to do it, stand as tall as you can with your feet spread shoulder-width apart. Place your fingers on the back of your head (as if you had just been arrested, hence the name prisoner squats).



Pull your elbows and shoulders back, this should naturally arch your lower back. Brace your core and hold it that way. Lower your body as far as you can by pushing your hips back and bending your knees. You should try to get the tops of your thighs should be parallel to the floor. Pause, then slowly push yourself back to the starting position. Keep your

weight on your heels, not your toes, for the entire movement. Your torso should stay as upright as possible. Don't let your lower back round. As mentioned above, squats actually help contract the core. Furthermore, studies have concluded these contractions are more intense than the traditional crunch. So, if you want stronger, tighter abs, be sure to squat.

7. Bent Over T's and Y's- This is a great exercise to warm-up and strengthen the deep muscles of the shoulders and upper back. They improve your posture, reduce risk of shoulder injury, and help you perform better. Try to perform 10 to 15 repetitions of this exercise every day. It only takes 2 minutes and could save your career. Use these coaching tips. Standing with feet hip width apart and bend forward at the waist keeping a straight back (not rounded). Draw your navel towards your spine and squeeze your glutes for spinal



stabilization. Raise your arms in a "Y" formation keeping thumbs **pointed up** at the ceiling. Lower your arms back to the starting position then raise your arms in a "T" formation with your thumbs **pointed down** toward the floor. Alternate between the "Y" and "T" formations until suggested reps are

[Click Here to see the Bent Over T's and Y's on video](#)

completed. Maintain good posture throughout the range of motion and make sure to control it.

8. Body Rows- The body-weight row does for the back side of the body what the push-up does for the front side. Body-weight rows obviously improve pulling strength of the upper-back, shoulders, and arm muscles. They also improve the stabilizing strength in the low back, glutes, and hamstrings, all of which are critically important for



improvement of total body power. You'll achieve a balance between lower and upper body strength by performing this exercise. For this one, you'll need a horizontal bar or beam which is sturdy enough to support your body weight. Set the bar at approximately the height of your navel (when you're standing straight up). To start the exercise, grip the bar with both hands slightly wider than shoulder width, and hold your body in support underneath the bar. Your heels should be on the floor, and your body should be straight and rigid from your shoulders to your ankles. Then, with your feet acting as a fulcrum, pull your chest up to the bar by bending your elbows and pulling them backwards. Return to the starting position by straightening your arms in a controlled manner, and repeat. If this version of the body row is too difficult, you can bend your knees and use your legs for assistance.



9. Crawling- You read that correctly, crawling is a great exercise to work core stability, strengthen the shoulder girdle plus it can help improve your coordination. Crawling can actually be a pretty intense workout! I recommend using a variety of directions and positions (forward, lateral, pulling objects) focus on keeping hands under your shoulders to avoid shoulder impingement and be sure to tighten core muscles during the exercise .



Crawling is a very applicable movement to firefighting.

One of the most basic crawls is the bear-crawl, which involves keeping your hips high in the air with your arms and legs

straight. If you haven't crawled since you were a baby, the bear crawl is a good way to ease back in. Another version, the spider-crawl is a lot harder than the bear-crawl. Instead of keeping your hips up, the spider-crawl has you bending your arms and legs while keeping your hips down. Imagine you are trying to get through a narrow tunnel without letting your belly touch the ground.

I recommend incorporating crawling with other fire ground movements into interval overhauls. These are 5 and 10 minute intervals performed at the end of your workouts. [Click here to read all about the Interval Overhauls and how to incorporate them into workouts.](#)

10. Foam rolling- A decade ago, strength coaches, personal trainers and athletic trainers would have looked quizzically at a 36-inch long cylindrical piece of foam and wondered, "What is that for?" Today, nearly every fitness center and most strength and conditioning facilities contain an array of foam rollers of different lengths and consistencies. A foam roller is a 3ft. long by 6in. piece of compressed foam. The idea here is that you roll your body weight along the foam roller, massaging through restrictions (adhesions) that may occur in your muscles (especially those of the back and legs) and thus causing the nerves to relax and loosen. This allows blood to flow more freely through the muscles and allow muscles *to heal and repair more efficiently*. The exercise physiology geeks (peer fitness



trainers) refer to this concept as "Self-Myofascial Release." Find a foam roller, it should be firm enough to support your body weight, then place a sore/tender muscle group (quads, hamstrings, calves, it band, chest, back) on it. Roll over the sore area slowly; try to hold for a couple seconds over each

trouble area. The more uncomfortable it feels, the more the muscle needs the

work. Hold your position on the “hot” (sore) spots for a couple of seconds to release the soreness. Re-position your body to hit the sore spot from different angles. You will probably love and hate the foam roller. I encourage you to try it more than a week before formulating



an opinion on its effectiveness. Just like a massage, there will be some discomfort when you hit the right spot. Over time the foam roller will get easier. Your muscles will be healthier and have less adhesions

(knots) making your body and back feel better. [***You can read more about foam rolling by clicking here.***](#)

Final Thoughts

I firmly believe that we as firefighters, EMTs and paramedics need to approach exercise and workouts like athletes do- have a thought process and plan for your workouts. The exercises you use in your workouts must help improve your performance on the fire ground. As I mentioned previously, this is not an all-encompassing list of the *best exercises* for fire rescue athletes, but by incorporating these ten exercises into your workout, you will be more "fit for duty." Give them, and variations of them, a try. Remember: Form is more important than weight, especially when dealing with core and balance exercises. Stay fit, stay balanced, and stay ready for duty.

To really see how these exercises (and many others) should be used to get the most out of your workout.....check out The FRF Ultimate Fire Athlete Workout (click or read below)....

[Click here to get the FRF Ultimate Fire Rescue Athlete Program today and start losing fat, getting strong, and be the "fittest" on your department.](#)



About Aaron Zamzow and Fire Rescue Fitness...

My name is Aaron Zamzow. I'm a Firefighter, Training Officer and EMT in Madison Wisconsin and also a certified and degreed Personal Fitness Trainer and author. I am the owner of Fire Rescue Fitness (www.FireRescueFitness.com) a company dedicated to creating products and blogs focused on keeping Firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics in top physical condition and "fit for duty."



First and foremost I am a firefighter/ EMT and have been for almost 10 years. I have also been working in the fitness industry as a Personal Trainer and author for 20 years. I've been fortunate to train with elite athletes for the NBA, NHL, and NFL and have studied under some of the top trainers in the world.

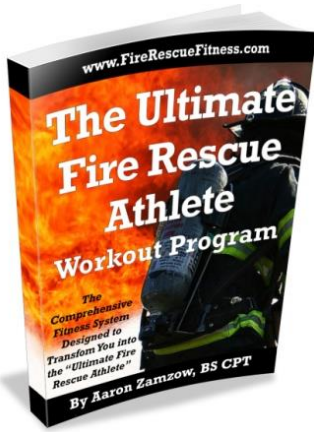
Please check out the Fire Rescue Workouts Page for programs created to get and keep you "Fit for Duty." I created Fire Rescue Fitness because I was discouraged by all of the programs on the market claiming to be geared toward firefighters. In most of these cases programs were written by trainers and not by firefighters. I developed the a wide range Fire Rescue Fitness Programs to give Firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics a foundation of fitness that not only gets you "Fit for Duty" but will take your fitness to the next level and keep you "Fit for Duty." All of my programs combine over 20 years of fitness and 10 years of firefighting experience and are endorsed by hundreds of fire rescue athletes and elite trainers.



Were you doing some of the above exercises?

Get strong, lean and in the best shape of your life. Take a look (scroll down) at these exceptional programs created for fire rescue athletes.





[FRF Ultimate Fire Rescue Athlete Workout](#)

This is the most comprehensive workout program for Firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics. You will transform your body at take your level of fitness to its highest level. The FRF Ultimate Workout has taken over 10 years to develop and perfect. It is over 12 weeks of planned workouts that will improve every aspect of fitness (conditioning, strength, and power). This program creatively integrates fire ground movements and 10-minute interval overhauls, challenge workouts and build power, strength, muscle, and burn fat. This program is intended for those Fire Rescue Athletes that have been working out but are looking to take their fitness to the **highest** level. The FRF ultimate workout is the most practical and result producing exercise program for Firefighters, EMTs and Paramedics period.

The Ultimate Fire Athlete Program includes:

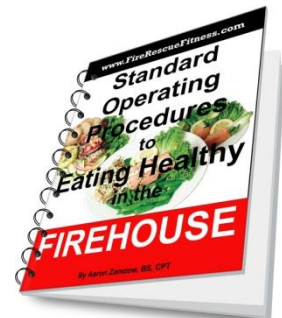
- ✓ 12-week Training calendar
- ✓ 9 full-body efficient and effective workouts
- ✓ Over 10 different Interval cardio workouts
- ✓ Over 100 Exercises including tutorial guides and videos
- ✓ Numerous efficient 10-minute Interval Overhauls
- ✓ Fire Rescue Athlete Training rationale
- ✓ Workout options for on-duty and crew workouts (group workouts)
- ✓ Core exercises and stretches (including a stretch and recovery guide)
- ✓ 5 challenge workouts to motivate and elevate your progress

BONUS (If you order today) –The FRF Ultimate Fire Athlete Gym Companion and Log Sheets

BONUS #2 (If you order today) – The FRF Stretch and Recovery Manual

DOUBLE BONUS- Order Today and get the FRF Standard Operating Procedures to Eating Lean in the Firehouse. This guide contains:

- Easy to follow eating guidelines
- The Do's and Don'ts of eating LEAN
- Authorized Food Lists
- Healthy Recipes for you and the crew
- Daily eating plans that follow the guidelines



[Click here to get more information about The FRF Ultimate Fire Rescue Athlete Workout Program--lose fat, get strong and be the "fittest" on your department.](#)

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Or...Check out the New

The FRF Rapid Fat Loss for Firefighters

Do your turnouts fit a little “tighter” these days? The Rapid Fat Loss for Firefighters program was designed for those Fire Rescue Athletes that want to get leaner and stronger in only 6 weeks. This is a “spin off” of the highly successful FRF Ultimate Fire Rescue Athlete Workout Program (Click here for more information and testimonials about the program). This comprehensive Fat Burning Program creatively integrates fire ground movements, crew workouts, 10-minute metabolic interval overhauls, challenge workouts and will get you stronger, leaner and more efficient on the fire ground. This program is intended for those Fire Rescue Athletes that have fallen off the fitness wagon and need an efficient plan to help get their turnouts and uniform fitting better. The 6-week Rapid Fat Loss Program includes:

- 6-week Rapid Fat Loss Training calendar
- Full-body efficient and effective workouts including 2 challenge workouts
- 4 different Interval cardio workouts including crew workout options
- Over 30 Fat Burning Exercises that will challenge every muscle in your body Exercises Exercise tutorials and video links
- 5 Highly Metabolic Interval Overhauls
- Fire Rescue Athlete Training rationale
- Including workout options for on-duty and crew workouts (group workouts)
- Core exercises and stretches (including a stretch and recovery guide)

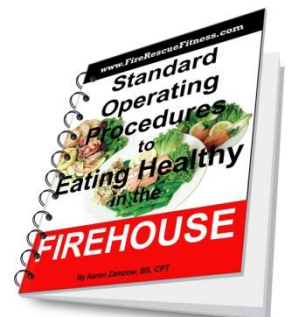
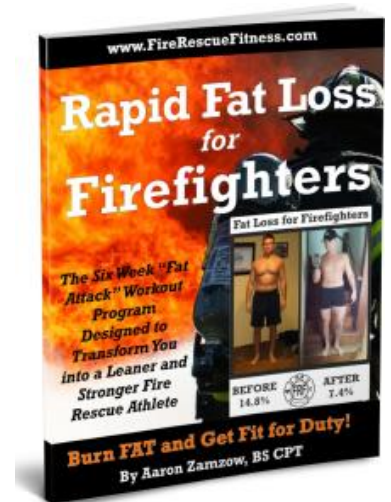
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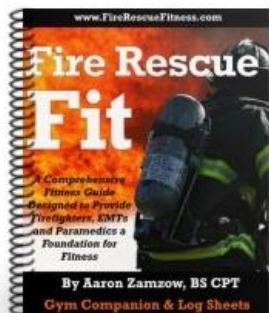


Has it been a while since you have consistently worked out? If you so, the FRF Foundations Program is for you.

[FRF Foundations Program](#)

It all starts with this program. The foundations program was created to help Firefighters, EMTs, and Paramedics lose extra pounds, get stronger, get leaner and be a better Fire Rescue Athlete. If it's been a while since you have been consistent with your workouts or you are coming off a prolonged "break" - this is the program for you. This is a comprehensive 12-week program that includes:

- Training calendar
- Six full-body efficient and effective workouts
- Two challenge workouts
- Interval cardio workouts
- Exercise guides and videos
- Lean eating guidelines
- Daily eating plans
- Fire Rescue Athlete Training rationale
- Authorized food lists
- Core exercises and stretches that will prolong your career



BONUS (If you order today) –The FRF Foundations Gym Companion and Log Sheets

- Printable workout calendar
- Printable workout sheets and logs to help you track your progress and use for reference in the gym
- PDF format that you can download on to your android phone, iPad, iPhone and/ or iPod.

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- Easy to follow eating guidelines and daily plans
- The Do's and Don'ts of eating LEAN
- Authorized Food Lists
- Healthy Recipes for you and the crew



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