

Total Worker Health for Wildland Firefighters Study Site Expectations

Project Goal: Develop, refine, and disseminate a comprehensive, easily accessible, and effective program to improve the health, safety, and well-being of those involved in fighting wildland fires.

Participants: Wildland firefighters, including career and volunteer, are eligible to participate. Participation is voluntary and all information is confidentially held by OHSU researchers.

March – September 2020: Survey and Focus Group/Individual Interviews

OHSU researchers will conduct video calls to meet participants for about 60 minutes, including:

- Project overview
- 10-minute surveys
- 50-minute group/individual interviews

The information collected will help develop the health and safety program.

March – September 2021: Program Implementation

OHSU staff will return to Fire Districts to implement and evaluate the program tailored to the schedule of each site.

March 2022: Program Dissemination

When the program is developed, it will be disseminated free of charge to firefighters across the United States.

Principle Investigator:

Kerry S. Kuehl, MD, DrPH

Professor of Medicine

Chief Health Promotion & Sports Medicine

Director Human Performance Laboratory

Oregon Health & Science University

3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, Mail Code CR110 Portland, OR 97239

kuehlk@ohsu.edu

(503) 494-5991

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Total Worker Health for Wildland Firefighters Study Summary

Purpose and Aims

FEMA Fire Prevention & Safety Grant Award is funding this project to develop, refine and disseminate a comprehensive, easily accessible and effective Total Worker Health (TWH) program for wildland firefighters (WFF).

Relevance

Fire seasons are longer, with more and larger fires, placing increased demands and risks on those fighting wildland fires. FEMA recognizes this critical need to better understand the occupational risks and hazards associated with wildland firefighting and develop a research based tailored health and safety program for wildland firefighters. This project addresses these priority areas to develop a total worker health and safety program for WFF agencies.

Methods

This is a 3 year study among 8 study site departments in the U.S. Year 1 includes conducting survey and interviews virtually with firefighters to identify and prioritize needs in domains of personal and work safety, physical health, mental/behavioral health and work environmental factors. Year 2 will consist of having the wildland firefighters implement the health wellness and safety program with a core group of training modules and electives to individualize the program for easy personal and professional needs. Year 3 will assess the program and refine the program with our panel of experts and partners including the IAFF, IAFC, NFFF, USFS, NVFC, in formatting a durable web-based dissemination platform, which we will promote freely to all fire service agencies.

Anticipated Outcomes

This project will result in an innovative, effective and scalable health promotion and safety program with a novel dissemination platform. The program will reduce injury/illness, mortality/morbidity and improve the safety, health and well-being of those involved in both structural and wildland fire suppression.

Contact Information:

Kerry S Kuehl, MD, DrPH, Principal Investigator

kuehlk@ohsu.edu

(503) 494-5991

Figure 1. Timeline, Aims and Proposal Phases and Major Activities

