

Wildland Firefighting and Food Safety

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Wildland fires are becoming more common, occurring earlier, experiencing a longer duration, exhibiting greater intensity, and larger in area of involvement. Some suggest this is a result of global climate change [1]. These fires for the most part are no longer the concern of the local fire department or even state fire services. Many of the fires due to size and complexity are employing resources on a national level and even requiring an international response. In many cases, all these factors have increased the risk for fighting wildland fires. Historically, the greatest acute hazard to firefighters has been cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD has been reported to be a factor in 45% of on-duty fatalities [2], yet this is only one of a myriad of hazards. During wildland fires, personnel will often reside near the event for days to months for

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safety. These concerns have even been vaguely addressed in training documents discussing wildland firefighting. As the number of large wildland fires continues to rise, problems of foodborne disease in this occupational group will increase. This raises the need for additional awareness and future research on the subject. Foodborne disease is a new arena for occupational health, one that requires attention.

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