

Wildland Firefighter Medical and Public Health Advisory Team Evaluation for Health-Related Research Requests

Purpose and Objective:

The purpose of this research project evaluation process is to systematically review research proposals that request access to Department of the Interior or US Forest Service wildland fire personnel during work hours. This evaluation process is used to:

- ensure that research projects are in alignment with current wildland fire safety, health and well-being priorities,
- reduce or prevent disruption of research on wildland fire operations,
- reduce or prevent duplication of current and past research studies,
- limit study fatigue and reduce the burden on wildland fire personnel, and
- provide a point of contact for researchers with possible wildland fire personnel participants

This evaluation process is **not** meant to facilitate a rigorous review of a research project's scientific merit, human subject protections, or address legal or labor management issues. However, the review panel will take these factors into consideration when evaluating projects and principal investigators will need to address these issues prior to initiating an approved project.

Proposals will be reviewed two times per year in the spring and late fall for consideration. Just-in-time proposals may be reviewed on an ad hoc basis, however MPHAT cannot guarantee the timeline for any review process, so it is recommended that principal investigators submit their request at least six months in advance of an anticipated data collection start date.

This process can be for projects in the pre or post-funding stage. For those in the pre-funding stage, this process can provide an initial review of the research and can be used for funding award applications. It is understood that depending pre- or post-funding stage not all sections may be applicable; however, any research or funding protocol should be submitted. Post-award funding applications are required to submit an approved Institutional Review Board protocol, informed consent forms, any planned recruitment materials, and any research or funding protocol that has been developed. Projects that receive pre-funding approval will need to re-complete the form with all sections fully completed and all materials submitted for review and final recommendation.

Any firefighter or supervisor can turn down participation in a research study or withdraw their participation at any time. Approval by FMB and MPHAT does not require or set up expectations of participation of fire personnel.

Interim Research Priorities - Based on a review of existing literature and input from the wildland fire community, the following research priorities were identified.

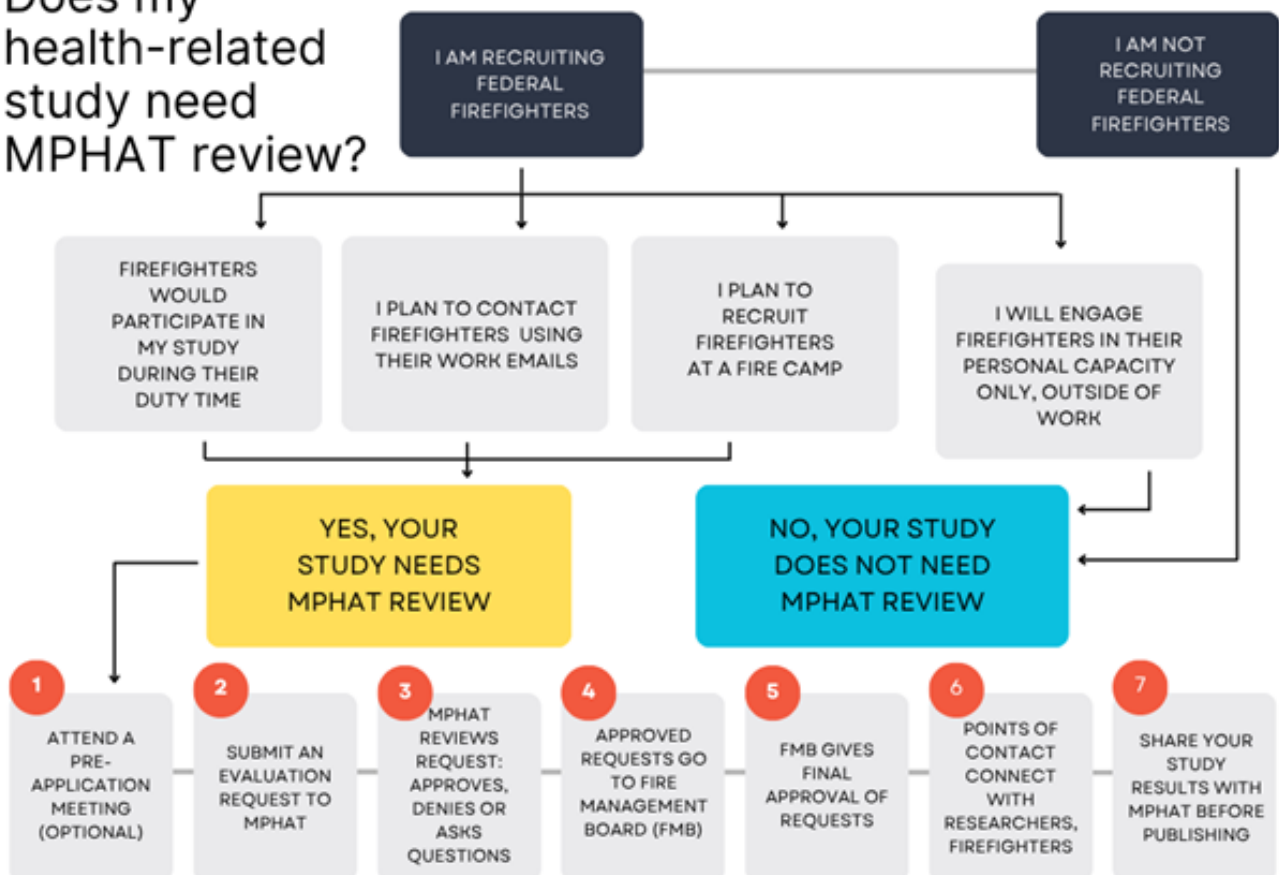
- Effects of smoke exposure on acute, sub-acute, and long-term health
- Effects of cumulative fatigue and sleep deprivation and optimal rest and recovery periods and impact of existing rest and recovery periods on health
- Mental and behavioral health stressors and/or evidence-based preventative/treatment strategies
- Chronic disease and cancer risk
- Musculoskeletal impacts from arduous and repetitive work
- Assessment of health effects or exposure in historically underrepresented groups in fire (i.e., Tribal firefighters and women)

Workflow for researchers recruiting wildland firefighters:

- Review MPHAT's evaluation form and research priorities,
- Schedule an optional pre-application meeting,*
- Submit application for MPHAT review,
- Receive approval, a request for more information, or a rejection notification by the MPHAT research group,
- If a researcher receives a request for more information, provide that information via email to the MPHAT research group and wait for a decision,
- If the MPHAT research group approves the proposal, it will move forward to the next stage of review, conducted by the MPHAT core team. The Fire Management Board (FMB) will provide the final review and approval for research requests,
- If the FMB approves the request, the researcher will be connected with Points of Contact (POCs) who will liaise between researchers and firefighters, and
- After the study is conducted and before publication, researchers should share results with MPHAT by emailing relevant information to the MPHAT research group.

* Researchers working on projects related to wildland firefighter health, safety, and/or well-being can schedule an optional 30-minute pre-application meeting with a member of the MPHAT. During the pre-application meeting the researcher(s) will have the opportunity to share their research idea and ask questions about MPHAT's research evaluation process and research priorities.

Does my health-related study need MPHAT review?



Please answer the questions below, keeping in mind that the information provided below will be used to evaluate your project by MPHAT with Questions 1-12.

Indicate the type of review requested:

Depending on the type of review, include a copy of your approved Institutional Review Board protocol, a copy of your informed consent form, any planned recruitment materials, and any research or funding protocol that has been developed.

Requesting Entity (Principal Investigator):

Proposed Project Start Date:

Question 1

- a. Please provide a brief project description, include project objectives:
- b. What is the research team's subject matter expertise in this research area and with wildland firefighters? Please provide an past relevant research work as an example.

Question 2

What is the anticipated project/study timeline?

Question 3

What are the anticipated benefits to the wildland fire community?

Question 4

- [illegible]

Question 5

How does your research align with current MPHAT research priorities?

Question 6

Does this project involve any kind of testing or evaluation of an intervention? If so, describe:

Note: all aspects of the project, including any interventions must still be in compliance with all federal and state regulations if the project is completed on duty-time.

Question 7

What level of participation from federal fire employees are you requesting?

- a. Briefly describe the sample collection methods and expectations for study participants (e.g. air sampling or blood draws). Describe the participation interval (e.g., one time, daily, weekly, monthly, annual, pre and post-season).
- b. Type and number of employees
- c. Include your study inclusion/exclusion criteria and justification
- d. Are employees expected to participate during duty-time? If so, Federal employee health and safety and labor laws may impact research protocols (e.g., compensation, overtime, travel to participate). Researchers should note: participants can not receive any compensation for participation during duty-time.

Question 8

What type of access to federal fire employees are you requesting? Please consider: the type of fire employee, the time of research activity with the employee, or the frequency of research activity.

Will the project require incident or fireline access? Can this project be completed on a prescribed burn? Address burden of time and support resources needed to conduct this project on a wildfire incident.

Question 9

Is there any additional assistance you are requesting to complete this research? (e.g., letters of support, union review) If yes, please describe and provide a timeline.

Question 10

Please list all collaborating organizations and individuals involved in your proposed project and their subject matter expertise.

Question 11

Is the project funded or do you anticipate this project being funded? What is your funding timeline?

Question 12

Is your funding contingent on access to wildland fire employees? (i.e., do you have access to another wildland firefighting population). Please provide the rationale for proposing to study federal wildland fire employees rather than other agency wildland fire employees (for example, state or county).

Question 13

How will the results of your project be shared and disseminated to the wildland fire community?

Question 14

Please list any risks to firefighter safety and health by participating in this study and how these risks will be addressed.

After review, to be completed by MPHAT Research Committee.

Question 1

What level of disruption will there be to the employees' current workload?

Question 2

Are there concerns about the implementation of study methods or proposed interventions?

Question 3

Have any risks to firefighter safety and health been identified and prevented to the extent of which they can be?

Question 4

Is this project in congruence with current MPHAT and agency research priorities and will it benefit our understanding of federal wildland fire health?

Question 5

Are there potential Human Resource Management or Union Issues? Or conflicts with OSHA or Federal Employee Labor Law? May need a separate opinion on this section.

PROJECT DETERMINATION

Recommended

Not Recommended

MPHAT Research Task Group

MPHAT Core Team - MPHAT Chair

Approved by:

FMB Chair