

Preparing New Jersey to Participate in the National Firefighter Registry: A Qualitative Study of NJ Volunteer Fire Departments

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INTRODUCTION

The US Firefighter Registry

- Legislation [H.R. 931] signed into United States (US) law on July 8, 2018 mandates the development of a voluntary cancer registry among firefighters in order to:
 - Better understand cancer among firefighters, and
 - Inform prevention strategies that reduce cancer incidence and mortality among firefighters
- Cancer registries collect population-based information on >98% of cancers diagnosed within the US
 - However, they cannot collect detailed information about the patient's occupational or volunteer experiences and exposures
- This registry will collect health and occupational data on firefighters throughout the US
- These data will be linked with:
 - State, population-based cancer registries to measure cancer incidence, and
 - The US National Death Index (NDI) to track mortality data
- While several states, including New Jersey, have recently passed presumptive legislation recognizing certain cancers as occupational diseases among firefighters, the creation of a national registry is a much larger effort to address this growing concern

Project Goal

To prepare NJ for participation in the National Firefighter Registry by gathering information from and about volunteer fire departments regarding:

- Data collection and storage
- The acceptability of data sharing
- The acceptability of a national registry

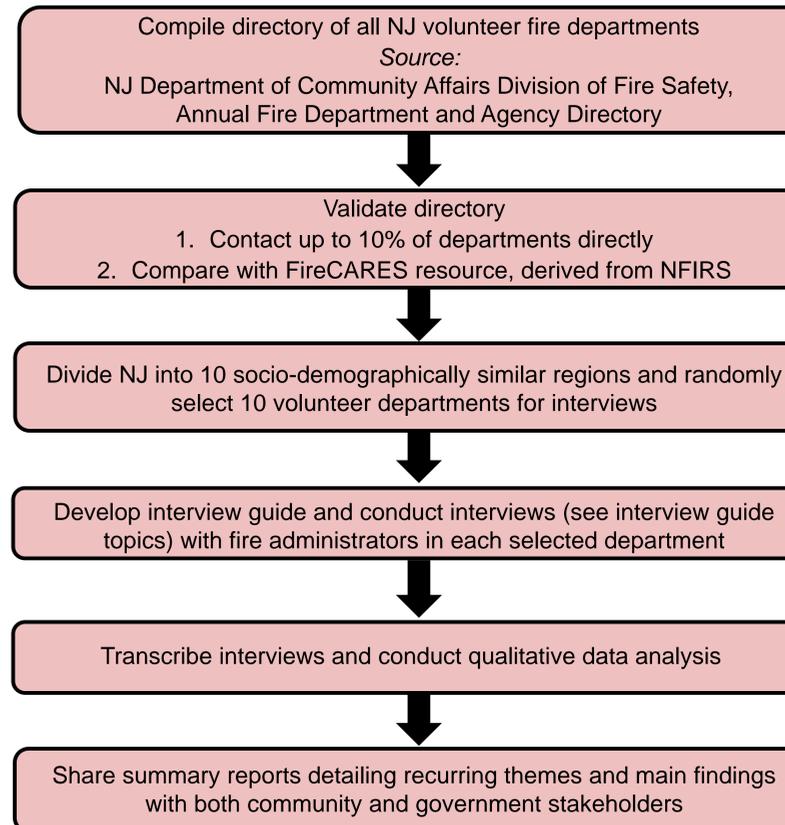
The New Jersey Firefighters Cancer Prevention Study (NJFF CAPS)

- A multidisciplinary research study initiated in direct response to concerns raised by local volunteer firefighters about excess cancer risk
- This study will address these critical questions facing Firefighters in New Jersey and nationally, including:
 - What cancers are NJ firefighters at risk of getting?
 - **How can NJ prepare to participate in a National Firefighter Registry?**
 - What contaminants are NJ firefighters exposed to?
 - What targeted interventions are needed to reduce cancer risk in NJ firefighters?
- New Jersey is the most diverse state in the nation- approximately 80% of firefighters are volunteer, 8% are minority, and 4% are women

The success of the National Firefighter Registry depends on its ability to successfully engage volunteer fire departments



METHODS



Interviewer Guide Topics

- The responders knowledge about, and attitudes toward, the National Firefighter Registry
- How the department functions:
 - Event response patterns
 - How long do volunteer usually stay affiliated with the department?
 - Do they receive a pension?
 - What are the requirements for volunteering with this department?
 - How many administrative support staff are there and how are they compensated?
- Record-keeping practices:
 - What records do fire departments maintain about volunteer participation and deployment?
 - Who manages the data?
 - How does the department track annual physical exams and ongoing training hours?
- Acceptability of data sharing among the membership
 - What data are considered confidential?
- This outline was developed in consultation with colleagues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Potential Benefits & Barriers to Implementing a National Firefighter Registry

- This project may help to identify potential methods for implementing a national registry of firefighters, as well as barriers, that are unique to volunteer fire departments
- Strengths of the project include:
 - Validation of methods to develop a state-based sampling frame for volunteer firefighters
 - Selection will include volunteer fire departments that vary in terms of:
 - Location: urban and suburban
 - Demographic composition of the community
 - Demographic composition of the fire department
- Potential challenges to this project may include:
 - Despite a thorough attempt to develop and validate a sampling frame of NJ volunteer firefighters, there may be differences between fire departments or individual firefighters, who enroll in our study compared to those who do not
 - While this project will inform work in New Jersey, the extent to which these lessons are generalizable to other states is unclear

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RESULTS

Table. Preliminary directory results

	n	%
Number of FDs	413	
Number of Duplicate FDs	29	7.0
Number of FDs with any contact information available	412	99.8
Number of FDs with multiple forms of contact information available	353	85.5
	Mean	S.D.
Volunteer Firefighters/dept.	42.4	28.1
Female Firefighters/dept.	2.1	2.4

