

## Overview

Firefighters face many hazards on the job and have a high rate of work-related injuries and illnesses (WRII). We analyzed Washington workers' compensation (WC) claims from 2006–2020 to characterize WRII in firefighters compared to law enforcement officers and “all other” workers.

WC claims with an injury date between January 1, 2006 and December 31, 2020 were analyzed. Firefighters and law enforcement officers were identified in the data by risk class (a WA-specific classification system that groups workers by exposure for insurance purposes). “All other” workers includes all workers except firefighters and law enforcement officers. Claims include those for workers covered by the State Fund and by self-insured entities. Analysis was restricted to claims that involve wage-replacement, disability or death (compensable claims).

The leading cause of compensable claims for firefighters and for “all other” workers was WMSDs, while for law enforcement officers it was “assaults and violent acts.”

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### Research for Safe Work

The SHARP Program at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries partners with business and labor to develop sensible, effective solutions to identify and eliminate industry-wide hazards. Learn more at: [lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/about-sharp](http://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-research/about-sharp)

## Work-Related Injuries in Firefighters

The Relative Burden of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses in Firefighters: An Analysis of Washington Workers' Compensation Claims, 2006–2020

*Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health*

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### Key Findings

- Firefighters had more compensable claims than law enforcement officers, and more than “all other” workers.
  - The rate was 1.4 times higher for firefighters than law enforcement officers, and 4 times higher than that of “all other” workers.
  - Firefighters and law enforcement officers had shorter wage-replacement durations than “all other” workers.
- Nearly 40% of claims for firefighters were work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs).
  - Common tasks associated with WMSDs in firefighters included lifting and transporting patients, tool and equipment use, and physical training.
  - The WMSD claims rate was 3.6 times higher for firefighters than law enforcement officers, and 4.8 times higher than that of “all other” workers.

### Impact

Fire departments and community partners can use these results to evaluate their injury and illness data to identify avenues for prevention and intervention efforts. WMSDs stand out as a priority area for firefighters – training on patient handling and transport, and on how to prevent injuries during physical training may be beneficial.

### Find the open access article here:

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/20/22/7077>

This research was funded by IPA #21IPA2116247 CDC-NIOSH and the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.

75-50-2023  
FY14-456 [05-2014]