

The InfoGram



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Firefighters face increased risk of atrial fibrillation

Research released by the American Heart Association (AHA) shows a disturbing find: [not only are firefighters at increased risk of atrial fibrillation \(AFib\) but the more fires they fight the higher the risk that firefighter will be diagnosed with AFib.](#)

What's more, researchers say this is hitting younger firefighters in age groups that do not normally see AFib symptoms. This may cause young firefighters - and medical professionals - to miss AFib as a potential problem and never get testing.

AFib is an irregular heartbeat that can lead to stroke, blood clots and heart failure. Symptoms of AFib may include fatigue, shortness of breath and heart palpitations. It is also possible someone with AFib may not have symptoms at all.

Researchers say several factors are likely contributing to this issue. Exposure to toxic materials in smoke, strenuous job duties and emotional or mental stress all tax the body. Personal habits such as smoking and a bad diet can also contribute.

Heart disease is a top cause of line-of-duty-death in the United States. All firefighters regardless of age or health history should talk to their doctor about the risk factors mentioned in this research and see if further screening is recommended.

(Source: [AHA](#))

Getting ready for vaccine distribution

Vaccine approval appears to be imminent for several pharmaceutical companies. Many Americans have questions: What happens now? [Who gets the vaccine first?](#) Is it safe and effective? Where do I go for the most accurate, up-to-date information?

Those on the front lines of pandemic response have their own set of questions: How is distribution being coordinated? What do we tell people? Who is supposed to pay for this? What paperwork is required to get reimbursed? What is reimbursable?

There are a number of guides and websites to help answer questions:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guide "[COVID-19 Vaccination Program Interim Playbook for Jurisdiction Operations](#)" covers planning and operationalizing vaccination response within your jurisdiction.
- Read key factors on the CDC's page "[8 Things to Know About Vaccine Planning.](#)"
- The Department of Health and Human Services discusses strategy in "[From the Factory to the Frontlines.](#)"
- FEMA's five-page guide "[COVID-19 Pandemic: Vaccination Planning FAQ](#)" covers federal funding sources that may reimburse vaccination mission support activities, including the FEMA Public Assistance Program.

Vaccine storage and handling will be different depending on what vaccine you are working with. Successful implementation requires close coordination across all levels of government and the private sector.

(Sources: Various)



Highlights

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Getting ready for vaccine distribution

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U.S. Fire Administration

The U.S. Fire Administration operates the Emergency Management and Response - Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC).

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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Response considerations for handling ultra-low temperature vaccines

Some vaccines likely to be approved soon need to be transported at low or ultra-low temperatures, around -109 degrees Fahrenheit. This presents several hazards to people handling them.

Dry ice will be used in vaccine transportation and storage. There are a number of potential concerns associated with the use of dry ice. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) "[White Paper on Dry Ice \(Carbon Dioxide\) Response](#)" published last week covers key response considerations the fire service and EMS personnel should be aware of prior to vaccine staging and distribution:

Dry ice is made of carbon dioxide (CO₂), a colorless, odorless gas. When dry ice sublimates from a solid state directly to a gas, it expands. Two situations could evolve from this:

- ❶ Expanding gas inside an enclosed transportation container could cause the container to leak or explode.
- ❷ CO₂ expanding in a small room displaces oxygen quickly and could knock out anyone in the room.

The White Paper goes on to discuss scene management, personnel safety, storage information, health hazards and patient management.

The IAFC stresses first responders should make every attempt to preserve the ultra-cold environment and protect the vaccine, and that the vaccines themselves are not harmful if accidentally released from broken containers.

See the IAFC's entire three-page guide for full details.

(Source: [IAFC](#))

PPE Preservation Planning Toolkit

The Department of Health and Human Services' Healthcare Resilience Working Group released a toolkit to help organizations implement Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) preservation strategies to help prevent or mitigate PPE shortages during the pandemic.

The "[PPE Preservation Planning Toolkit](#)" is the only tool designed specifically for planning purposes to provide estimates of the impact of implementation of preservation strategies on PPE burn rate and supply longevity.

Users can enter their organization's data into the toolkit to compare how PPE usage and supply duration changes:

- ❶ Without implementation of preservation strategies.
- ❷ With implementation of an initial set of preservation strategies.
- ❸ With implementation of initial and additional preservation strategies.

The toolkit can be used as a complement with other tools that calculate PPE burn rates based on historic use. See the PPE Preservation Planning Toolkit Fact Sheet for more information and links to the other elements of the Toolkit, the Guide and the Tool.

(Source: [TRACIE](#))

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Cyber Threats

CISA releases new Insider Threat Mitigation Guide

Organizations have a duty to protect themselves and their employees from unnecessary physical and cyber risks. Managing, detecting and preventing insider risk is everyone's responsibility, and it is critical that efforts to manage this responsibility are tailored to each organization's environment and its mission's unique nature.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) new Insider Threat Mitigation Guide offers planning and preparedness resources from federal and private sector experts. It is a one-stop shop of valuable best practices, metrics, tools, videos and training that can be used by organizations looking to prepare for and respond to insider threats with the highest level of success.

CISA's [Insider Threat Mitigation](#) webpage also offers an Insider Threat 101 fact sheet; Pathway to Violence video and fact sheet; and information for human resources departments on their role in identifying and preventing insider threats.

Additional information on critical infrastructure security and resilience is available on [CISA's website](#).

(Source: [CISA](#))

North Korean hackers targeted COVID vaccine maker AstraZeneca

Suspected North Korean hackers have tried to break into the systems of British drug maker AstraZeneca in recent weeks, two people with knowledge of the matter told Reuters, as the company races to deploy its vaccine for the COVID-19 virus.

The hackers posed as recruiters on networking site LinkedIn and WhatsApp to approach AstraZeneca staff with fake job offers, the sources said. They then sent documents purporting to be job descriptions that were laced with malicious code designed to gain access to a victim's computer.

The hacking attempts targeted a "broad set of people" including staff working on COVID-19 research, said one of the sources, but are not thought to have been successful.

(Source: [CNBC](#))

Criminals to favor ransomware and BEC over breaches in 2021

The era of the mega-breach may be coming to an end as cybercriminals eschew consumers' personal data and focus on phishing and ransomware, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC).

It argued cybercriminals are relying less on stolen personal information and more on "poor consumer behaviors" such as password reuse to monetize attacks.

The ITRC is already seeing a drop-off in data breach activity as a result. In October it claimed that the number of reported breaches up to Quarter 3 was 30 percent lower than the same period in 2019, with 60 percent fewer individual victims.

It claimed that 2020 is on track to record the lowest number of breaches in the United States in 5 years.

(Source: [InfoSecurity Magazine](#))

Cyber Information and Incident Assistance Links

[MS-ISAC](#)

SOC@cisecurity.org
1-866-787-4722

[IdentityTheft.gov](#)

[IC3](#)

[Cybercrime Support Network](#)

General Information Links

[FTC scam list](#)

[CISA alerts](#)

[Law Enforcement Cyber Center](#)

[TLP Information](#)

The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.