

Abstract

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Human Health Impacts of Wildland Fire

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Abstract

The confluence of extreme weather conditions and crowded forests are contributing to larger and more severe forest fires. The progressive migration of the US population into the wildland-urban-interface is placing more people in the path of wildfire, while the emissions from wildland fire are reversing historical improvements in national air quality and placing the health of people remote from the wildfire at risk. The presentation will describe the historical pattern of wildfire in the U.S., factors contributing to a significant increase recently, and projections for wildfire behavior into the future. The human health effects of wildfire will be addressed within the context of mental health issues emerging among survivors of wildfire, and health effects to exposure to emissions of firefighters, and populations at a distance. Clinical and public health recommendations for individuals and communities to protect themselves from smoke exposure will be presented.

Learning Objectives: Describe the factors that are increasing the size and severity of wildfire. Describe actions individuals and communities can take to reduce exposure to wildfire smoke. Describe key unanswered questions requiring new research to inform policy and decision-making by professionals charged with managing forests and environmental quality, prescribed fire, public health and healthcare.