



TO: L. Kaili McCray  
Chair, Wildland Fire Medical and Public Health Advisory Team

FROM: Sarah Fisher  
Chair, Fire Management Board

SUBJECT: Tasking to Develop a Wildland Firefighter Fatigue Research Project

**Purpose:** This memorandum communicates the Fire Management Board's (FMB) decision to task the Wildland Fire Medical and Public Health Advisory Team (MPHAT) with developing recommendations for fatigue research priorities and a summary of best practices based on other government agencies and/or published research. Recommendations are intended to better inform potential beneficial changes to current fatigue and work/rest related policies.

**Tasking and Deliverable:** MPHAT will involve a National Association of State Foresters and a National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) liaison in the planning and development of recommendations. Working together with all partners, MPHAT will define, guide, and draft the scope of a fatigue research plan and summarize any best practices for fatigue management to be shared with FMB. It is recommended this targeted study assesses and addresses the gaps in existing research to ensure efficiency in efforts and leverage applicable results from external research efforts. This research plan development and follow-on implementation work should be done in coordination with assistance from any other known partner organizations or agencies who can provide guidance and expertise, such as the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP).

The research plan may include, but is not limited to:

- The use of modern devices to assess and measure fatigue in wildland fire responders.
- The consideration of factors impacting fatigue, such as: shift length, assignment length, number of days off after assignments, sleep quantity and quality, sleep debt and sleep banking concepts, caffeine use, nutrition, health factors, fitness, and memory.
- Collaboration/coordination with key research partners in the public and/or private sectors.

The due date for identifying a group of key subject matter experts, initial draft research plan with anticipated timeline and any funding requirements and recommended next steps back to the FMB is March 2024.

**Background and Coordination:** NWCG Risk Management Committee has been reviewing fatigue research and associated mitigation standards for more than a year. Given that this is a complicated/dynamic subject, scientific research and review of best practices are needed before changes can be proposed. RMC briefed FMB, NMAC and NWCG EB during a joint session in April of 2023 and the three parent bodies agreed on the need to conduct further research on wildland firefighter fatigue.

**Contact:** Sarah Fisher, FMB Chair, [sarah.fisher@usda.gov](mailto:sarah.fisher@usda.gov)

Signed by:  
Sarah Fisher  
Deputy Director, Forest Service  
Fire & Aviation Management

**Distribution:**  
NWCG EB  
FMB  
NWCG Staff