

# Hot under the collar: The untold dangers firefighters face in the line of duty

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What do you think is the biggest cause of death for firefighters on duty? Well if your first thought was burns or smoke inhalation you'd be wrong! According to research published in the June edition of *Vascular Medicine* "since 1977, sudden cardiac death has accounted for the largest share of on-duty deaths among firefighters - surpassing burns, trauma, asphyxiation and smoke inhalation."

Although the number of deaths amongst firefighters is declining, [cardiac death](#) still counts for 42% of deaths in on-duty firefighters over the past 5 years. This is an astonishingly large figure! A potential untold problem that could be putting additional strain on firefighter's hearts is heat stress as firefighters wearing heavy insulating protective gear are often required to partake in intense exercise whilst fighting fires. Two studies to be published in *Vascular Medicine* have sought to examine the impact of heat stress on the heart and in blood vessels, looking at how much impact firefighters protective uniforms have on the heart and the effect of aspirin on blood vessel function.

Dr. Hamburg, Associate Editor of *Vascular Medicine*, stated that: "These two studies demonstrate that heat stress may be a key factor in contributing to cardiovascular risk in [firefighters](#) though its adverse effects on blood vessel function".

Dr. Mobin Malik and Dr. Michael Widlansky commented that: "These two investigative groups should be commended for their efforts in further advancing our understanding of the impact of heat stress on

vasculature and pointing us in the direction of potential mechanisms and therapies."

Provided by SAGE Publications

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