

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: CAMP CRUD

Date: September 12, 2017

Location: Eagle Creek Fire,
Hood River, Oregon



CAMP CRUD

Plaguing Wildland Firefighters Year After Year . . .

Ask firefighters what “Camp Crud” is and you’ll usually get answers ranging from sinus and lung problems to digestive upset.

The NWCG Risk Management Committee defines Camp Crud as: “A combined upper and lower respiratory illness, accompanied by cough and fatigue.”

Every year toward the end of fire season, this illness affects incident personnel at both large as well as small base camps.

Preventive Measures

Due to its annual recurrence, Camp Crud tends to be seen as something wildland firefighters and support personnel endure as a normal hazard of the job. However, you should know that there are preventive measures you can use to help eliminate or reduce the incidents of Camp Crud affecting you or the fire community.

Contributing Factors

At times, the exact cause of Camp Crud can be hard to pinpoint. It is most often linked to infectious agents, lung irritants, or particulate matter such as dust and smoke exposure, dehydration, lack of sleep—or a combination of all of these factors.

It’s important to note that once your respiratory system is affected, the rest of your body’s normal functions will also be impacted. Even when exposure to these factors may be short term, experienced over a few days, or long term—such as throughout the fire season—your body’s capability to ward off infection and other pathogens is greatly reduced. The (over) exposure to these factors increases your likelihood that Camp Crud and other ailments will affect you.

And we shouldn’t forget that other Camp Crud contributors include poor personnel hygiene and the prolonged use of soiled clothing and bedding.

As a wildland firefighter, many of these conditions can be a part of daily life which, at times, cannot be avoided.

What You Can Do

Although Camp Crud is a common problem that is seemingly inevitable, there is much that can be done to prevent or lessen the number of these incidents. The Medical Unit Leader assigned to the Eagle Creek Fire in Hood River Oregon was asked what proactive measures can be taken to help keep Camp Crud at bay.

**Here are some simple solutions that this Medical Unit Leader
says you should consider:**

Individuals

- ❖ Practice good personnel hygiene and be sure to wash your hands regularly. Utilize fist bumps rather than a handshake when greeting others.
- ❖ When available, use laundry and shower facilities. Being covered in dirt and grime is no longer cool and will not fool others into thinking you're a better firefighter.
- ❖ Ensure adequate sleep and stay in a tent to help eliminate dust and smoke inhalation. A tent can act as a respiratory barrier.
- ❖ Although the volume of water needed to stay hydrated varies from individual to individual, wildland firefighters need to drink at least 5-6 quarts of fluid per day during hard work. (U. S. Forest Service National Technology and Development Program recommendation.)
- ❖ When coughing up phlegm, avoid spitting in high traffic areas such as on the ground in camp, near sleeping areas, or in other places where cross-contamination on boots and hands can occur.
- ❖ Never allow bottles or cups containing spit to be stored inside a vehicle.

Crews

- ❖ Identify risk/reward payoffs during suppression efforts and exercise restraint to avoid overexposure to smoke, ash, and other airborne contaminants. When particulate matter and smoke can't be avoided, pullback when possible or use a bandana to cover your nose and mouth.
- ❖ Be cognizant of the group and avoid overexertion by taking regular breaks.
- ❖ Ensure work/rest ratios are maintained and that everyone is getting enough sleep.
- ❖ Pay attention to early signs/symptoms of illness among crew members. Seek treatment early or isolate individuals until diagnosed. Sickness and disease can spread quickly in fire camp and must be taken seriously.
- ❖ Check-in with crew members regularly to maintain open and honest dialog on how individuals are feeling. Often times, illness goes untreated or is hidden because folks don't want to be pulled from the line or sent home.

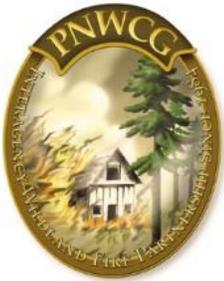
Incident Management Teams

- ❖ Be aware of respiratory contaminants that may be present when selecting sites for camps (such as dust, manure, smoke, etc.).
- ❖ Encourage dust abatement actions to be a standard part of daily activities and implement the use of bark dust, tarps, or other hardened surfaces.
- ❖ Ensure bathroom and shower facilities are available, utilized, and cleaned regularly.
- ❖ Provide a well-equipped Medical Unit and consider "Doc in a Box" type resources prior to the onset of an outbreak.
- ❖ Provide handwashing stations throughout camp and hand sanitizer to crews.

- ❖ Utilize briefings and the IAP to disseminate information on preventative measures and other pertinent medically trends occurring in camp.
- ❖ Develop an action plan to combat Camp Crud and implement it as early as possible.

Bottom Line:

***Don't let Camp Crud rob you of overtime this season!
Follow the guidance/great tips provided here to help keep you
and your crew from feeling the blues.***



***This RLS was submitted by:
Aaron Pedersen***
**PNW RLS Team,
with support from the Pacific
Northwest Coordination Group**

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