# Consideration for changes during improvement phase

## Abstract

Firefighters are often exposed to extreme temperatures of more than 100°F resulting to heat exhaustion. It is thus common for fire service departments to initiate change cycles as a way of addressing the problem of heat exhaustion. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) stipulates some measures of managing extreme heat environments that are often factored into the change cycles by the fire service department. However, this paper finds clarification of the problem, building consensus, considering the available options, and appropriate planning as some of the factors that must be considered during the improvement phase in managing heat exhaustion.

## Introduction

Based on the baseline results analyzed from multiple of literature and scholarly sources concerning heat exhaustion among the firefighters, it is evident that both the individual firefighters and the fire service departments have roles in the management of heat exhaustion. Moreover, most studies conducted on heat exhaustion among firefighters agree that implementation of appropriate training programs, use of state of the art equipment and facilities in the management of fire and emergency services as well as the development of standard protocols are instrumental in limiting the detrimental effects of heat exhaustion. However, despite the presence of well-articulated plans, it is still not enough when these plans are not appropriately implemented (Patel, Rao & Saha, 2006). Thus, this paper will attempt to analyze some of the factors and issues that should be considered when making changes during the improvement phase of managing heat exhaustion.

## Consideration for changes during improvement phase

Heat exhaustion is of particular concern both to the physical and psychological well-being of a firefighter. Therefore, it is important that several improvements be made in the fire service department to enhance the safety of the profession. Among the critical improvements that can be made in the department is restructuring the training program to ensure that the program suits the survival needs of a firefighter during extreme temperatures they often operate. However, for the improvement in the training program, one of the considerations that must be taken into account is the clarification of the problem and how an implementation of the training program would help address the problem of heat exhaustion. Clarification of the problem as a consideration is crucial to enhance the evidence-based nature of training. With the training based on evidence, both the trainees and the trainers are able to channel their energies into getting more value from the training sessions (Son, Lee & Tochihara, 2013).

Building consensus is another important consideration to make in the improvement phase of managing heat exhaustion. Administrative, professional, and managerial consensus needs to be built around the strategic vision of eliminating heat exhaustion among the firefighters. Building consensus helps in resolving the questions of whether to aim for radical changes across the organization or whether to streamline specific processes initially followed by expansion of functionality over time. Multivariate id scholarly sources concur that building of consensus helps in the creation of a high-level strategic group that includes senior managers and other line managers, which makes improvement in processes to be effective as it will not suffer from communication breakdowns (Cuddy & Ruby, 2011).

It is equally important to consider the available options during the improvement phase. As indicated by the NFPA, several options can be used by the fire service departments and the individual firefighter in the management of heat exhaustion, including; drinking of sufficient quantities of water, wearing loose, breathable clothing, having appropriate gears, maintaining a climate controlled climate, and training the firefighters among others. From all these options, it is important for the fire service department to consider their weights and appropriateness to assign sufficient amount of resources to the specific options, as all these options have a varying amount of importance in the management of heat exhaustion (Son, Lee & Tochihara, 2013).

Appropriate planning is also a consideration that must be made during the improvement phase in managing heat exhaustion. It takes both reflective and targeted efforts to plan transformative changes for effective management of heat exhaustion. In as much as flexibility in strategy is required, appropriate planning is necessary before improvement of a process so as to ensure that the improved process does not become a failure. Therefore, it is critical that the managers of the fire service departments consider the levels of planning that have been factored into the improvement process as well as to examine the appropriateness of the plans. These factors would ensure that the plan is feasible, appropriate and tailored for the management of heat exhaustion (Patel, Rao & Saha, 2006).

## Conclusion

Improvement is among the most important phases of the change process that must be handled effectively for quality results. Since heat exhaustion is a palpable problem in the fire service department, improvement phase is of even greater weight, hence to make the phase more efficient, this paper finds clarification of the problem, building consensus, considering the available options, and appropriate planning some of the factors that must be considered during the improvement phase by all the stakeholders in the fire service departments (Cuddy & Ruby, 2011).

## References

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