



## Australian Firefighters' Health Study Bulletin No 1

Monash University is delighted to announce that the Australian Firefighters' Health Study has commenced. The study will investigate the cancer and mortality experience of firefighters in Australia. We will be issuing six monthly bulletins of the progress of the study. These will be available on the study website: <http://www.coeh.monash.org/ausfirefr.html>.

### What is the Australian Firefighters' Health Study?

In 2008/09, Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) commissioned Monash University to undertake a project to assess the feasibility of conducting a cohort study of cancer, mortality and other possible health outcomes in Australian and New Zealand firefighters.

After review of the data held by the firefighting agencies and consideration of the scientific aspects of a study, a national retrospective cohort study of Australian firefighters was considered feasible. This retrospective cohort study of Australian firefighters is now to be undertaken by Monash University under a contract with AFAC.

### Participating agencies

The study will assemble a cohort of former and current, career, part-time paid and volunteer firefighters by extracting data from existing computerised personnel records held by the following firefighting agencies:

- ACT Emergency Services
- Airservices Australia
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority, WA
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board, Melbourne
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- NT Fire and Rescue Service
- Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Other agencies are considering participation and may join the study.

### Why is this study important?

No previous published study has undertaken analyses based on the incident data included in this study. The use of such data is likely to result in more refined exposure assessment methods than previously used.

It is anticipated that this combination of health and exposure data, will give a much better picture of the risk to Australian firefighters, and potentially where these risks are.

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## Study progress

The study has made good progress to date on several fronts:

- The Contract for the study which is held with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) has been signed and Sabine Pircher has been employed as the Research Officer.
- The following Firefighters' Health Study contact points have been established at Monash:  
Freecall number: 1800-818 765  
Email: [firefighterstudy@monash.edu](mailto:firefighterstudy@monash.edu)  
Website: <http://www.coeh.monash.org/ausfireftr.html>
- The Monash team have written the Study Protocol which sets out how the study will be conducted and a database has been prepared. Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) has granted ethics approval to the study.
- A Study Advisory Committee including representatives of stakeholders has been established. The first meeting took place on November 21st 2011. The meeting reviewed the study's scope and methodology, agreed the Advisory Committee terms of reference and discussed the study plan, schedule and reporting process.
- Monash will collect data on an agency by agency basis. Each agency will be asked to provide necessary information such as names, dates of birth and post code of firefighters and service history information such as job title, number and type of fires attended. The information will be sent to Monash in a secure fashion.
- Data will be transferred to professional and experienced data managers at Monash University. Electronic data will be held in a database on a Monash University server which will only be accessible via password secure login. Monash computers are in offices which are locked out of hours and are in a secure section of the building that is only accessible by a card key. Data will only be accessed by members of the study team at Monash University. All Monash researchers sign confidentiality agreements in relation to research they undertake. Study reports will not identify any individuals. Findings will only be reported in grouped format.

To learn more about the study or to find copies of this and future bulletins, visit our study website: <http://www.coeh.monash.org/ausfireftr.html>. If you have any questions or comments, please send an email to [firefighterstudy@monash.edu](mailto:firefighterstudy@monash.edu).