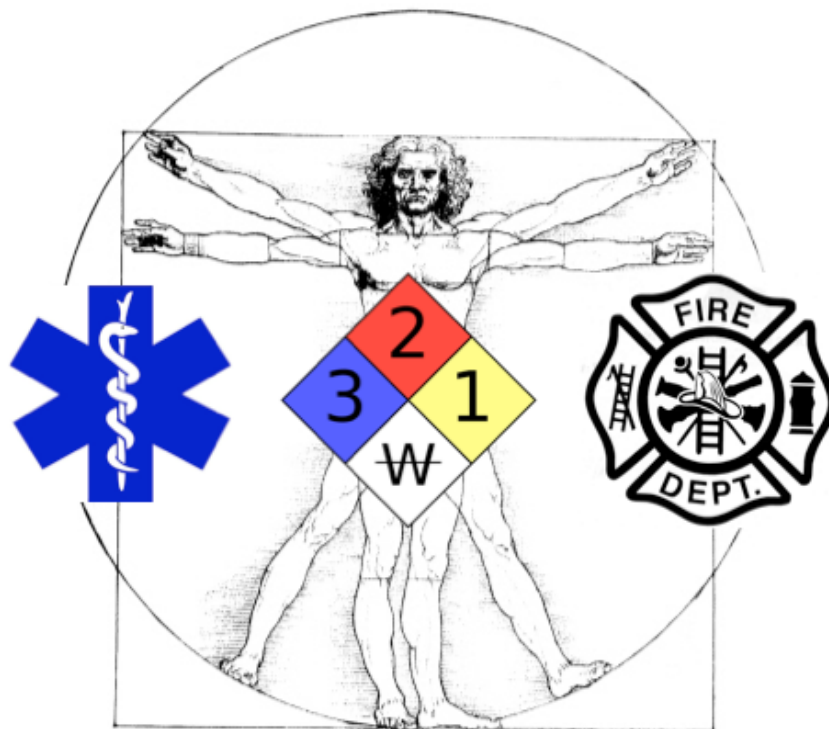

Is high intensity training the new HIT of firefighter fitness?

A review of High-intensity Fitness Training Among a National Sample of Male Career Firefighters . Original article written by: SA Jahnke et al. Safety and Health at Work 2015 6: 71-74.

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www.firefighterresearch.org

Introduction

Obesity and fitness levels are a large health concern among firefighters. Firefighters have physically demanding job duties that require high levels of aerobic fitness and muscular strength in order to perform them safely. However, many firefighters do not meet the standards. Overweight and obesity rates among firefighters are estimated at 80% and cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of line of duty deaths. This study evaluated self-reported physical activity, diet, and high-intensity training (HIT) participation and the association with obesity and fitness.

What the study did

This study examined survey data from 625 male firefighters including height, weight, percent body fat, blood pressure, and self-reported measures of diet, physical activity, and participation in HIT. Based on the surveys, they were then divided into categories of subjects who participated in HIT and those that did not, to compare the data between the groups.

What the study reported

The study reported that 32.3% of participants had engaged in HIT and they were approximately half as likely to be classified as obese using body fat % or waist circumference. The firefighters that were involved in HIT were also more than twice as likely to meet the 12-MET recommendation for aerobic fitness. For every month of HIT training participation, the likelihood of reaching the aerobic fitness recommendation increased by another 3%. The days per week of HIT training were also related to meeting the 12 MET recommendations and reductions in the risk of being classified as obese.

What it means for the fire service

The HIT program includes functional movements at a high intensity but short duration. In the future, HIT could be incorporated into firefighter training, in order to decrease their obesity rates, cardiovascular disease risk factors, improve fitness, and ability to perform firefighting tasks safely. More research needs to be done on the benefits that come with various types of training in order to find the best prescription for optimal results.

