

**INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:**

**What's New** 2  
**at the WRI**

**Word Search** 3

**Spotlight on** 3  
**Service**

**Contact** 4  
**Information**

# Firefighter Risk & Resilience Study Newsletter - Winter 2018



## Wildfires in Southern California



**CITATIONS:** <http://people.com/human-interest/most-shocking-images-california-wildfires/southern-california-wildfires-forces-thousands-to-evacuate>; <http://abcnews.go.com/US/santa-visits-california-firefighters-working-stop-massive-thomas/story?id=51987892>

The Thomas Fire, which started in December of 2017, has quickly become the largest wildfire on record, in California. The fire is said to have “spread from Santa Paula to Ventura and wrap around Ojai before pushing toward Santa Barbara and inland forests.” Thus far, 281,620 acres have been scorched and 1,063 structures have been destroyed. According to officials, although 86% of the fires are contained, approximately “18,000 additional structures are threatened,” as the fire continues to blaze into January.

Investigators are unsure how this fire began. According to David Peterson, senior research biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research station, “wildfires in Northern California are often caused by lightning storms [and] 99% of wildfires in Southern California are caused by humans.” To combat these fires, firefighters depend on “bulldozers, fire engines, inmate crews, helicopters, and airplanes.”

Unfortunately, there are several threats that could exacerbate conditions. Changes in wind can create a “spot fire”, which is “when an ember from the main wildfire gets blown

into a nearby bush or field, ultimately creating a second fire.” In addition, while rain and humidity are desperately needed to assuage conditions, rain can also bring about new challenges, such as mudslides, debris flows, and flooding.

With devastation abound, it became exigent for first responders to come together. Crews from 19 states joined with the California fire departments in order to respond to this national disaster. Pat Russel, deputy chief of Anaheim Fire Department reported that crews were “focusing on Rose Canyon and Hartman Ranch (north of Ojai) to watch for flare-ups.” These individuals were tasked with sustaining containment lines and extinguishing hot spots. At one point 9,000 individuals were assigned to the fire, but after conditions improved, most were sent home.

Robert Baird, director of fire and aviation management for the Forest Service, accounts that this fire season has been exceptionally severe. In addition to the Thomas Fire, crews had to respond to a destructive fire in Santa Rosa. Because of crew members being required to work around the clock, several units report fatigue.

Many individuals have worked near 1,000 hours of overtime. It is reported that 2,000 crew members are working extended hours, even on Christmas Day.

To acknowledge and offer appreciation for firefighter efforts, Santa and Mrs. Clause paid a visit to the Ventura County Fire Department for Christmas. The team tweeted a picture on Christmas Eve with the caption, “Santa is at #ThomasFire base camp thanking firefighters for their hard work this #Christmas, he knows a little about working during the holidays. He will join us again tomorrow!”

The Thomas Fire is expected to be fully contained by January 20th, thanks to the relentless and altruistic efforts of first responders.

**Sources:**

<http://beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-thomas-fire-christmas-20171225-story.html>

<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/5670/>

<http://beta.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-fires-church-20171224-story.html>

<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2017/12/26/southern-california-wildfires-trigger-mass-destruction-hurting-families-economy.html>

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/santa-visits-california-firefighters-working-stop-massive-thomas/story?id=51987892>

## What's New at the WRI?

The Warriors Research Institute is honored to have been awarded grants for two upcoming projects involving the utilization of telehealth. Telehealth provides convenient and affordable care to individuals who experience a lack of available resources. The first, Project ACCESS, aims to improve the behavioral health of firefighters by developing a telehealth clinic that provides protocol driven, evidence-based treatment.

Vet Paths, the second project, similar to ACCESS, intends to provide and evaluate peer support within Central Texas veterans and veteran families, and to deliver evidence-based treatment via telehealth. To do this, we will first develop a Peer Support Training Program for the Veteran Community, and then train a group of veteran and veterans' family members to serve as Peer Support Specialists in the community. Following the training, graduate students will be educated on how to provide culturally sensitive treatment to veterans and veteran families, by setting up a telemental health clinic. This clinic will be housed here at the Warriors Research Institute.

We look forward to these projects expanding the reach of evidence-based mental health treatment via telehealth. Stay tuned to the WRI website (WRI@sw.org) for more information!



Source: <https://mhealthintelligence.com/features/leveraging-primary-care-telehealth-for-convenience-and-quality>

## Word Search

### Fire and Rescue

W	I	B	A	L	E	S	E	M	A	L	F	H	F
O	E	T	O	A	E	P	H	E	L	M	E	T	I
L	A	O	S	O	L	E	G	L	O	V	E	S	R
L	R	G	H	M	T	E	S	L	R	H	S	E	E
E	O	O	A	A	O	S	H	E	E	S	T	C	T
Y	A	O	P	O	S	K	A	S	D	T	C	D	R
E	F	M	S	E	S	E	E	U	G	L	F	T	U
L	I	M	N	P	T	N	A	R	D	Y	H	E	C
O	R	F	L	A	S	H	L	I	G	H	T	M	K
P	E	H	S	K	L	A	D	D	E	R	F	L	B
L	S	O	I	H	M	L	A	O	A	H	V	R	S
M	U	S	R	E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	Y	W
T	I	E	E	G	O	G	G	L	E	S	G	D	D
U	T	T	N	E	A	E	T	R	A	D	I	O	R

- FLASHLIGHT
- HELMET
- HOSE
- RED
- SIREN
- FIRE TRUCK
- HYDRANT
- GLOVES
- RADIO
- YELLOW
- FLAMES
- ROPE
- BOOTS
- GOGGLES
- POLE
- EMERGENCY
- SMOKE
- FIRE SUIT
- LADDER

Source: <https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/9784/fire-and-rescue/>

Play this puzzle online at : <http://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/9784/>

## Spotlight on Service

In our newsletters, we highlight firefighter service outside the line of duty from the cities in our study. In this newsletter, we focus on Austin, Texas.



Source: <https://www.expouav.com/news/latest/austin-fire-department-drones/>; <http://kut.org/post/austin-fire-department-could-soon-be-using-search-and-rescue-drones>

The Austin Fire Department has recently teamed up with undergraduate students from the University of Texas in Austin. The goal of this collaboration: to improve search-and-rescue missions using new drone technology. This 17-student team, led by Professor Armand Chaput, attempts to demonstrate how drones can assist firefighters in search and rescue missions after natural disasters.

The Austin Fire Department and University of Texas undergraduate students teamed up at the Austin Radio Control Association to test their drone on a mock rescue mission. The drone was set to fly in a lawnmower pattern and locate tarps which represented possible houses with distressed individuals inside. Using coordinates and live video foot-

age, the drone operators were able to locate and visualize the targets.

The hope for this new technology is that it will expedite search and rescues by sending a live video feed back to a computer. This would allow for a drastic increase in land coverage during these missions, without sacrificing valuable manpower. Austin Fire Rescue teams are reported to begin practicing with the drones in 2018.

One such team is the Robotic Emergency Deployment (RED) Team, founded by Richard Davis.

The Austin Fire Department is the first major metropolitan fire department to obtain authorization to operate drones in the national airspace. Assistant Chief Davis, has been appointed to the National Council on Public Safety by the

International Association of Fire Chiefs, which he uses as a platform for disseminating the benefits of using drones in fire rescue as well as addressing any public concerns. Because of his efforts to establish innovative and progressive means to enhance fire and life safety delivery, he received the Lone Star Achievement Award.

Great job, Austin!

#### Sources:

<https://www.austinmonitor.com/stories/2016/04/austin-fire-department-soon-using-drones/>

<https://www.expouav.com/news/latest/austin-fire-department-drones/>

<http://kut.org/post/austin-fire-department-could-soon-be-using-search-and-rescue-drones>

<http://www.kvue.com/news/local/ut-students-drone-could-help-austin-firefighters/355533623>

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## Moving? Changing your phone number?

**If so, please let us know so we  
can update our  
information. Contact**

**Fatima Dobani at:  
(254) 730-2674**

**OR**

**Fatima.Dobani@BSWHealth.org**



Don't forget that you can contact us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year!