

# SAFETY MATTERS

## National Preparedness Month - Fires

September is [National Preparedness Month](#), a time to raise awareness and ensure solid waste workers are ready for disasters and emergencies that could happen at any time.

Fires can cause massive damage and require a lot of recovery and clean-up by solid waste workers. These tips will help keep workers safe after fires occur.

- Never assume fire-damaged structures, walkways, sidewalks, parking lots and roads are stable. Do not work around any fire-damaged structures until after they are inspected.
- Smoldering debris, contact with something flammable, or exposure to oxygen can re-ignite fires. Review your procedures for handling fires in collection vehicles or at your facility.
- Smoke from fires can make breathing difficult and harm your health. Wear masks as necessary and be extra cautious if you have an existing condition, like asthma or heart disease.
- Employers and workers should be aware of increased risk for heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and fainting.
- Stress, long hours, and fatigue may increase the risk of injury and illness. This increases when combined with personal losses and emotional trauma after a disaster.



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