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North County Fire Authority Health, Wellness & Safety Newsletter

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Topics:

- C. diff
- Symptoms/
Who's at
Risk
- Prevention
- Healthy
Recipe
- Traffic
Hazards

Health Tip

Utilize proper hand washing technique with soap and warm water.

Workout Tip

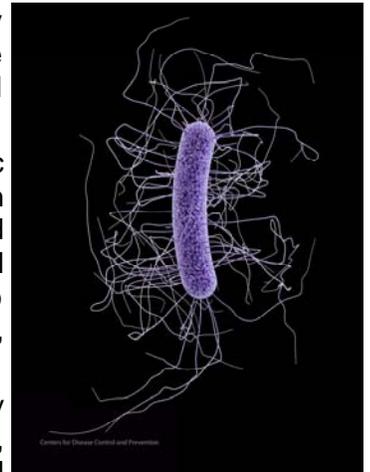
Stair running is an exercise imperative for firefighters. Goal is 60 steps a minute for 20 minutes.

Clostridium Difficile

Clostridium difficile (*C. diff*) is extremely contagious and we encourage all health care practitioners to practice safe infection control procedures.

C. diff is a spore-forming, gram-positive anaerobic bacillus that produces two exotoxins: toxin A and toxin B. It is a common cause of antibiotic associated diarrhea (AAD). *C. diff* accounts for 15-25% of all episodes of AAD. *C. diff* infection may result to pseudomembranous colitis, toxic megacolon, perforations of the colon, sepsis and rarely death.

Clostridium difficile is transmitted through feces. Any surface, device or material (e.g., carpet, bedding, commodes, bathing tubs and electronic rectal thermometers) that becomes contaminated with feces may serve as a reservoir for the *C. diff* spores and transmitted to health care workers by touching spore contaminated objects. *C. diff* spores can live on hard surfaces as long as five months.



Symptoms & Who's at Risk

Symptoms

The main clinical symptoms of *Clostridium difficile* infection include:

- watery diarrhea
- fever
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal pain/tenderness

Who's at Risk

Patients that are at increased risk for *Clostridium difficile* infection are those with:

- antibiotic exposure
- gastrointestinal surgery/
manipulation
- long length of stay in healthcare settings
- a serious underlying illness
- immuno-compromising conditions
- advanced age

Traffic Hazards to Firefighters While Working Along Roadways

Description of Hazard

The number of firefighters struck and killed by motor vehicles has dramatically increased within recent years. Motorists accustomed to a clear, unobstructed roadway may not recognize and avoid closed lanes or emergency workers on or near the roadway. In some cases, conditions can reduce a motorist's ability to see and avoid firefighters and apparatus. Some examples include weather, time of day, scene lighting (i.e., area lighting and optical warning devices), traffic speed and volume, and road configuration (i.e., hills, curves, and other obstructions that limit visibility). These hazards are not limited to the fire service alone. Other emergency service providers such as law enforcement officers, paramedics, and vehicle recovery personnel are also exposed to these hazards.

Recommendations for Prevention

Any firefighter working along any type of roadway runs the risk of being struck by a motorist. To prevent such incidents, NIOSH recommends that fire departments and firefighters take the following actions:

Fire departments:

- Develop, implement, and enforce standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding emergency operations for roadway incidents.
- Implement an incident management system to manage all emergency incidents.
- Establish a unified command for incidents that occur where multiple agencies have jurisdiction.
- Ensure that a separate incident safety officer (independent of the incident commander) is appointed.
- Develop pre-incident plans for areas that have a high rate of motor vehicle crashes.
- Establish pre-incident agreements with law enforcement and other agencies such as the highway department.
- Ensure that firefighters are trained in safe procedures for operating in or near moving traffic.
- Ensure that firefighters wear suitable high-visibility apparel such as a strong yellow-green or orange reflecting flagger vest when operating at an emergency scene.

Firefighters:

- Ensure that the fire apparatus is positioned to take advantage of topography and weather conditions (uphill and upwind) and to protect firefighters from traffic.
- Park or stage unneeded vehicles off the roadway whenever possible.
- If police have not yet arrived at a scene involving a highway incident or fire, first control the oncoming vehicles before safely turning your attention to the emergency.
- Position yourself and any victim(s) in a secure area that maximizes your visibility to motorists when it is impossible to protect the incident scene from immediate danger.
- Use a traffic control device that maximizes your visibility to motorists when controlling traffic.

For complete article, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2001-143/pdfs/2001-143.pdf>

CDC/DHHS (NIOSH) Publication Number 2001-143