

**ORIGINAL PAPER**

**Smoking as an Extra Risk Factor of Firefighters in Greece: A  
Descriptive Study**

**Kyriakoula Merakou, BA, MSc, PhD**

Teaching and Research Associate, Dept. of Public and Administrative Health, National School of Public Health, Athens, Greece

**Stamatina Tsikrika, MD, MSc**

Pneumologist, Greece

**Eleftherios Thireos, MD, MSc, GP**

Health Center of Vari, Athens, Greece

**Dimitrios Theodoridis, MD**

Cardiologist, National Instant Aid Centre, Athens, Greece

**Kallirhoe Kourea, MD, PhD**

Cardiologist, Athens, Greece

**Anastasia Barbouni, MD, MSc, PhD**

Pediatrician, teaching and Research Associate, Dept. of Public and Administrative Health, National School of Public Health, Athens, Greece

**Corresponding author:** Kyriakoula Merakou, National School of Public Health, 196, Alexandras Ave., Athens, 11521, Greece E-mail: kmerakou@esdy.edu.gr

**Abstract**

**Background:** Fire fighters face a high risk for many diseases especially because of high levels of carbon monoxide (CO) and other toxic risks. Fire fighters who smoke are at greater risk. Smoking increases the risk of getting respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and poorer treatment outcomes for certain diseases.

**Objective:** The objective of this study was to examine the smoking profile of healthy fire fighters in Greece and the degree of their addiction to smoking. This can quantify the need for smoking cessation interventions in the workplace.

**Methodology:** Three hundred fire fighters filled in an anonymous questionnaire about the level of addiction to nicotine, estimated by the Fangerstrom questionnaire.

**Results:** Eighty seven percent of the fire fighters were found to be systematic smokers, defined as smoking 10 cigarettes or more per day. Seventy five fire-fighters (25%) were slightly addicted to smoking (score <3), 174 (58%) were moderately addicted (score 4-6), and 51 (17%) were highly addicted (score 7-10). 194 (64.6%) found the first cigarette of the day to be the hardest to avoid with 46 (15.3%) lighting up within the first five minutes of waking up. Those who lived in the city and had a high addiction to smoking were significantly more likely to have difficulties in areas where smoking is not allowed. Thirty six (12%) fire fighters continue to smoke even when they are ill.

**Conclusions:** The high prevalence rate of systematic fire-fighters smokers indicates that the provision of cessation support services is essential. The results of our research also reflect the need for relevant studies that focus on similar working populations.

**Key words:** smoking, firefighters, addiction