

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

Wildfire Preparedness and Evacuation Planning in a Pandemic

Working Group Description:

The Working Group aims to understand the public health, social and ecological dimensions of wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning in a pandemic. From June to November 2020, the Working Group will conduct a series of virtual research interviews with institutional and community representatives in two locations—Nevada County, California and Larimer County, Colorado. The Working Group will develop in-depth case studies on community perceptions and practices of safety for wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning in a pandemic. These case studies will be designed to inform the development of inclusive, responsive, and people-centered policies to address cascading public health, social, and climate crises. The Working Group commits to adopting an ethical framework of CARE—Collaboration, Accountability, Responsiveness, and Empowerment—to foreground the experiences and perspectives of historically, socio-economically, and politically marginalized people.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. The social and ecological dimensions of wildfire resilience in a pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Research Question 1</u>: How is the pandemic affecting social norms and methods of collaboration for wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and evacuation planning? • <u>Research Question 2</u>: How are volunteers and community-based organizations— such as, Fire Safe Councils, Firewise communities, prescribed burn associations, and neighborhood associations— continuing their fuel management and wildfire preparedness work during the pandemic? • <u>Research Question 3</u>: What kinds of innovations and alternatives are being adopted to address community wildfire mitigation,

	<p>preparedness, and evacuation planning in the context of the pandemic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Research Question 4</u>: How are current public health related challenges impacting ecological restoration and fuel management work in forests, conservation easements and watersheds? ● <u>Research Question 5</u>: In the context of cascading public health, social and climate crises, how are community-based and local organizations ensuring inclusive, just, and equitable access to critical infrastructure, power, housing, health care, food, and water?
<p>2. Community perceptions of health and wildfire safety in a pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Research Question 1</u>: In what ways are community perceptions of COVID-19 related health and safety concerns changing approaches to wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning? ● <u>Research Question 2</u>: In the context of COVID-19 related health concerns, how are communities perceiving their exposure to smoke, for example, from prescribed burns or during evacuations? ● <u>Research Question 3</u>: What are the specific wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning needs and challenges for hospitals, emergency health care facilities, and assisted living facilities during the pandemic? ● <u>Research Question 4</u>: Is appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) available and accessible to frontline workers and volunteers, and do they think their PPE is keeping them safe? ● <u>Research Question 5</u>: How do community perceptions of health, safety, and access vary regarding wildfire evacuation, transportation, and shelters?
<p>3. Community practices for wildfire safety in a pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Research Question 1</u>: How are prescribed burn volunteers and crews keeping safe and working together? What are some of the implications for how prescribed burn trainings, workshops, fire camps, and ‘work parties’ will be organized over the coming months and years? ● <u>Research Question 2</u>: How are people with language and access and functional needs receiving appropriate risk information and timely emergency alerts during the pandemic? ● <u>Research Question 3</u>: How are community volunteers assisting residents, including those with access and functional needs, with evacuation planning and preparedness activities? ● <u>Research Question 4</u>: How are individuals and groups who are recovering or still affected by COVID-19 preparing for safe evacuation, transportation, and recovery in shelters?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

In the context of unfolding public health, social, and climate crises, it is important to prioritize intersectional analysis of community perceptions and practices of safety. Research in this area will seek to engage with people from diverse backgrounds, including people from Indigenous, refugee, and migrant backgrounds, with due consideration of age, income, housing, access and functional needs, gender, and racial and ethnic identities. Looking into the future, disaster research, policy, and practice can be guided by an ethical framework of CARE—Collaboration, Accountability, Responsiveness, and Empowerment—to foreground the perspectives and experiences of historically, socio-economically, and politically marginalized people.

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