

# Firefighting ethics: Principlism for burning issues

## Interaction between Humans, Technology, Organisation and Society

**The purpose of the present project was to identify relevant ethical principles for prioritizing, distribution of resources and responsibility in fire protection and to empirically assess different actors' attitudes to such principles. The background was the shortage of specific ethical codes or guidelines for fire-related issues, and the uncertainty that prevails regarding the public's expectations about the fire service's ability and the actual ability. If there is a discrepancy here, different actors' views on responsibility might be affected. The project contained a review of the literature. In comparison to the area of health care, this literature is small.**

A web survey was conducted, which contained a total of 54 questions. They were background questions, questions about experiences of fire and fire protection, turnout times, attitudes towards responsibility and prioritizing, opinions about some hypothetical ethical dilemmas, and ranking of principles for prioritizing. The survey was conducted in collaboration with Sifo International. The survey was distributed to a nationally representative web panel in the autumn of 2009. Over 800 answers were received.

Some of the results were that the respondents think that individuals are to a large extent responsible for their own fire safety and that they typically do not worry much about fire safety in their everyday lives. Furthermore, the respondents think that those who live in remote areas cannot reasonably expect the same help from the fire service as people in more densely populated areas, but that those people should be given support, e.g. subsidized fire extinguishers. The respondents' reactions to a number of hypothetical dilemmas involving triage shows that in some cases lotteries are preferred solutions. The principle of saving the greater number received support, as did saving children rather than old people.

### Report

The report can be downloaded from [www.brandforsk.nu](http://www.brandforsk.nu), project number 203-081.

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