Background
- The National Fire Protection Association found over 40% of firefighting injuries were overexertion and strain.
- Sprains and muscular injuries also accounted for 40% of firefighting injuries.
- These injuries could be prevented with the use of a load-bearing exoskeleton.

Research Objective
How can we reduce overexertion injuries in firefighters?
- Exoskeletons have seen introduction into the manufacturing industry to reduce physical strain.
- Our team’s research is focused on developing an exoskeleton tailored to firefighters that is heat resistant, inexpensive, comfortable, and practical.

Methodology
- Design, build, and test successive prototypes that improved upon each other.
- Draft the first design for our exoskeleton on paper and in the CAD software SolidWorks.
- Construct the first prototype with easily obtainable materials such as 3-D printed ABS plastic and nylon straps. This was tested for comfortability and qualitative effect.
- Design the second prototype with information gathered from the first, and built with sturdier materials like powdered Nylon and leather straps.

Current Prototype
- Draft the first design for our exoskeleton on paper and in the CAD software SolidWorks.
- Construct the first prototype with easily obtainable materials such as 3-D printed ABS plastic and nylon straps. This was tested for comfortability and qualitative effect.

Testing
- Conducted qualitative tests of the first prototype focusing on the ergonomics of the design.
- Tests for the second and future prototypes will include:
  - Stress testing of the spring at realistic loads.
  - Use EMG (Electromyography) and an oximeter to quantify exertion during tasks both with and without exoskeleton support.
  - Thermal testing to determine heat and flame rating of exoskeleton.

Future Research Goals
- Test the exoskeleton to real-world thermal and force loads.
- Discuss with firefighters for future iterations of the prototype.
- Determine material selection for production models.
- Verify integrability of exoskeleton with standard firefighting equipment (oxygen tank, turnout gear).
- Specific parts of our prototype need to be able to safely withstand thermal loads.

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