

# NEW JERSEY FIRE

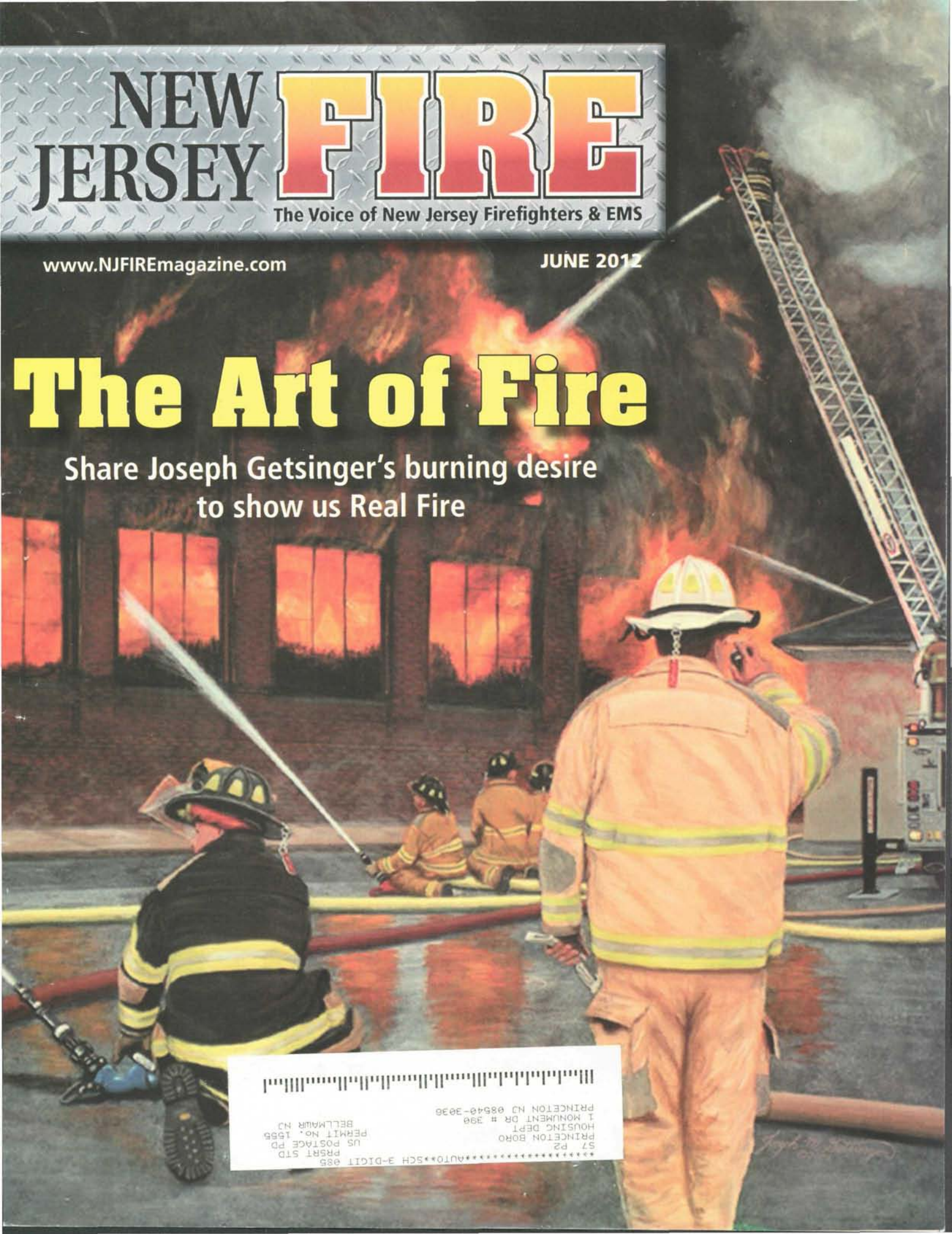
The Voice of New Jersey Firefighters & EMS

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## The Art of Fire

Share Joseph Getsinger's burning desire to show us Real Fire



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## Watering down some of the health and fitness legends



**Matt  
Brzycki**

Urban legends abound. Ever hear the one that cracking your knuckles causes arthritis? Well, a medical doctor from California cracked the knuckles of his left hand at least twice per day for 50 years (which amounts to more than 36,500 times). Meanwhile, he cracked the knuckles on his right hand “rarely and spontaneously.” After 50 years, he found no signs of arthritis in either hand.

Urban legends also abound in fitness and nutrition.

Here are a few:

**A person doesn't start using fat as an energy source until after 20 minutes of exercise.**

The main source of energy that's used during an activity depends on the level of the effort, not the time of the effort. At rest, your body primarily uses fat as an energy source. As your level of effort increases, there's a greater reliance on carbohydrates to provide you with energy.

So, you don't have to exercise for 20 minutes before using fat as a source of energy. In fact, as you read this article, your body is mainly using fat as an energy source.

Besides, it's ridiculous to think that the body automatically switches to fat as an energy source at exactly the 20-minute mark.

**Walking a mile uses the same number of calories as running a mile.**

The American College of Sports Medicine offers equations for determining oxygen consumption and caloric expenditure during walking and running. Based on these equations, a 200-pound man who walks one mile in 20 minutes on a level surface would utilize roughly 5.25 calories per minute (cal/min). During the course of his 20-minute walk, he would use about 105 calories

[5.25 cal/min x 20 min].

If that same individual ran one mile in 10 minutes on a level surface, he would use about 16.22 cal/min. During the course of his 10-minute run, he would use about 162.2 calories [16.22 cal/min x 10 min].

Running a mile, then, would utilize significantly more calories than walking a mile: 162.2 calories compared to 105. This is true despite the fact that the duration of walking was twice as long as running.

**People need to drink eight glasses of water per day to be healthy.**

Another legend is that people should drink at least eight eight-ounce glasses of water – one-half gallon – on a daily basis. And according to the legend, other fluids don't count toward this goal.

The fact is that there's no scientific evidence that people need to drink eight eight-ounce glasses of water each day (or any other specific amount, for that matter). Obviously, it's important to drink water but the exact volume varies greatly from one person to the next based on such factors as age, size, level of fitness, level of activity and environmental conditions.

Let's not forget, too, that many foods and beverages – most notably milk, fruits, fruit juices, vegetables, sport drinks and soup – are very high in water and, thus, can be counted toward the daily total.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Most fitness- and nutrition-related urban legends have been repeated so many times for so many years that they've been accepted blindly as gospel. Yet, most of them have absolutely no factual basis whatsoever. When it comes to urban legends, you must be able to separate science fact from science fiction.

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