

2024 Firefighter Safety Standdown Training Content

Day 1: Back to Basics, Firefighter Cancer Risks



Introduction

Firefighting is a profession that comes with significant health risks. One of the most serious risks faced by firefighters is cancer. Studies have shown that firefighters are at a higher risk of developing certain types of cancer compared to the general population. This content outlines the importance of cancer prevention, provides key statistics on firefighter cancer, and recommends strategies to reduce exposure to carcinogens.

Statistics on Firefighter Cancer

1. *Increased Cancer Risk:* Firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer compared to the general U.S. population.
2. *Common Types of Cancer:* The most common cancers among firefighters include testicular cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, skin cancer, and malignant mesothelioma.
3. *Age Factor:* Younger firefighters (under 45) are at a particularly higher risk for certain types of cancer, highlighting the need for early and ongoing preventive measures.

Strategies to Reduce Exposure

1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Decontamination:

- On-Scene Gross Decon: Immediately after firefighting operations, use [decontamination methods to clean PPE](#). Brush off larger debris, then rinse gear with water.
- Annual Gear Cleaning: Ensure that all PPE, including helmets, gloves, hoods, and boots, are sent in for annual cleaning, and after every training and working fire.

2. Hygiene Practices:

- Shower Within the Hour: After returning from working fire, food on the stove, and all other incidents where you were exposed, shower as soon as possible to remove contaminants from the skin. Use Fire Wipes if possible beforehand.
- Clean Uniforms: Change out of contaminated gear and clothing immediately. Keep a second set of clean uniforms available.

3. Equipment Maintenance:

- Respiratory Protection: Always use SCBA during overhaul operations to prevent inhaling carcinogenic particles. Comply with the [No Drop Rule](#).
- Proper Storage: Store PPE in a clean, dry environment away from living quarters to prevent cross-contamination.
- Hood Cleaning: Participate in the [Wash Your Hood Sunday](#) initiative.

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4. Health Monitoring:

- Annual Physicals: Participate in annual health screenings and cancer screenings. Early detection is crucial for effective treatment.
- Ultrasound Early Detection Health Screening: Sign up for ultrasound screenings for continuous health monitoring.

Review

Cancer prevention is an essential aspect of firefighter safety. By adhering to the recommended practices and staying informed about the latest research, you can significantly reduce your risk of cancer. Let's commit to protecting ourselves and our colleagues through vigilant and consistent application of these preventive measures. Please review these two short videos:



[Cancer in the Boston Fire Department \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)



[FIREFIGHTER CANCER PREVENTION: Decon \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)