



## *Cancer Prevention for Fire Fighters*



### **Cancer Prevention for Fire Fighters**

#### ***Saving Lives and Money***

It is now widely known that fire fighters fall ill to cancers as a result of their toxic working environments. Death and illness happen at a rate much higher than the general public.

In recent years, science has pointed to absorption through our skin as a major entry point of toxins and mutagens to the body, along with inhalation.

Ensuring that protections from these hazards for fire fighters is in place will save fire fighter lives and taxpayer money.

#### ***Mandating Safe Operational Procedures***

The Fire Sector Section 21 Committee is crafting guidelines that serve to protect the health and safety of fire fighters and reduce future liabilities to all parties.

While guidelines are helpful, they are not enforceable and not required to be implemented. Cancer Prevention Programs need to be placed into regulation to protect the brave women and men who protect our communities.

#### ***Respiratory Protection and Cancer Prevention Programs***

Respiratory protection programs include elements such as; knowledge of roles and responsibilities, hazardous situation identification, proper fit, care, knowledge, use and decontamination of breathing apparatus equipment. It is prudent to note that respiratory protection is well understood and included in regulation.

Cancer Prevention Programs include elements that limit fire fighters to the hazards only while they are fighting the fire and working in the fire scene. There is no regulation mandating these. Cancer prevention programs have steps to include preventing the cross contamination of fire department vehicle interiors, station interiors, personal spaces like lockers, personal vehicles and even our homes. Procedures must include:

- on scene initial cleaning of smoke contaminated protective equipment, clothing, skin and body followed by,
- appropriate handling of contaminated equipment in vehicles for the return to station and,

- the immediate full decontamination of equipment, clothing and body at the fire station,
- Proper use of protective gloves, clothing and respiratory protection to decontaminate pieces of equipment and vehicles in station and or,
- Use of third-party specialists to decontaminate items.

These are essential elements at an emergency that go hand-in-hand with maintaining a toxin free fire station and may seem complex, but they are basic. Ontario's fire fighters are prepared to put it all on the line at an emergency scene, but being exposed to the toxins of the same fire, several times over is an unacceptable risk

***Do you Support Your Fire Fighters?***

If you have our backs, we ask that you send a letter to the Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour and the Honourable Doug Ford, Premier, and ask them to direct the Fire Sector Section 21 Committee to establish Cancer Prevention Programs that will be set into regulation, to ensure all fire fighters are protected from unnecessary continued and secondary toxic exposures.

**Copies of correspondence and further inquiries should be forwarded to:**

**Mark Train  
Executive Vice-President  
Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association  
637 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1M5  
mtrain@ontariofirefighters.org**