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DID YOU KNOW

Firefighters are at an increased risk of developing cancer.

There are steps that firefighters can take to reduce the risk.

www.LLS.org/FireFighters



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All firefighters, whether they are career or volunteer, put their own lives at risk to save others. Multiple studies have found that firefighters are at an increased risk for several types of cancer due to the smoke and hazardous chemicals they are exposed to in the line of duty.

Why is there an increased risk for cancer?

1. Homes and buildings contain synthetic and plastic materials that create more smoke when burning than natural materials. They release polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), many of which can cause cancer. Cancer-causing agents are called “carcinogens.”
2. Firefighters may also encounter other known carcinogens (such as asbestos and diesel exhaust) when on the job.
3. Carcinogens are both inhaled and absorbed through the skin. Even when wearing the proper gear, the carcinogens can still penetrate the gear, exposing the skin to toxins.

Some steps firefighters can take to reduce the risk:

1. Wash yourself as soon as possible after every fire.
2. Clean, care for and store gear properly.
3. Always wear appropriate gear and breathing protection whenever exposure is possible such as during overhaul and investigations.
4. Inform your doctor about being in the fire service—even if you are a volunteer or retired. Ask about a schedule for cancer screenings.
5. Reduce exposure to diesel exhaust from the firetruck.
6. Follow a healthy lifestyle.
7. Track your exposure.

National Firefighter Registry

In 2018, Congress directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create the National Firefighter Registry (NFR). The registry will be used to track links between workplace exposures and cancer. With the data collected by this registry, researchers will be able to better understand the risk of cancer among firefighters. Enrollment for all U.S. fire service members is expected to open in the Summer/Fall of 2022.

Visit www.cdc.gov/niosh/firefighters/registry.html for more.

Visit www.LLS.org/FireFighters for more information and a full list of ways firefighters can protect themselves.