

Cancer Risk Factor Reduction

Introduction: All hostile fires have known and unknown contaminants that can cause serious health problems. To reduce the risk to fire district personnel engaged in fire suppression and overhaul duties, districts should develop processes to reduce their exposures to these health hazards. These processes can be split into two categories: In-station and on-scene procedures. Cancer may never be eliminated from the fire service, but districts can take steps to reduce firefighters' exposures to carcinogens and promote a healthy lifestyle. Effectively managing these risk factors requires an organization-wide effort that includes leadership, management, supervision, accountability, and personal responsibility.

Board and Management Duties

- The district board has implemented a policy outlining the areas of responsibilities such as
 - Finance – funding sources, expenditures, capital planning
 - Health and Safety Officer – qualifications, authority for accountability
 - Logistics – acquisition of PPE and decon equipment and cleaning and maintenance of PPE
 - Operations – selection and use of PPE and authority for accountability
- The district actively promotes a tobacco and nicotine free workplace.
- The district actively promotes firefighter wellness to combat cancer risk factors.
- The district considers the budget with a specific focus on cancer risk reduction:
 - Provide adequate sets of turnouts to allow for cleaning.
 - Provide more than one hood for individual firefighters.
 - Provide more than one set of gloves for individual firefighters.
 - Provide for machine washing of turnouts after events.
 - Assessment of station design: storage of turnouts, vehicle exhaust, overall ventilation, etc.

Policy Considerations

- The district has implemented policies and procedures requiring:
 - The use of appropriate PPE by all personnel during **all** stages of fires, including overhaul and investigations.
 - **Appropriate PPE is determined by the chemical and physical hazards known or presumed to be present at an event.**
 - Consideration should be given to requiring apparatus operators to be on air.
 - Establishing cold, warm, and hot zones. Limit entry into hot zone to only necessary personnel.
 - Wet method gross decontamination of **all** PPE prior to leaving the scene and/or entering rehab.
 - Dirty, but deconned PPE to be bagged and/or placed outside the cab when possible.
 - Methods to remove contaminants from an individual's body, i.e., showering, wipes, sauna, etc.
 - No PPE worn inside the station classrooms, offices, or living areas.
 - No dirty PPE taken home or transported in personal vehicles.

- Regular washing of PPE consistent with manufacturer's recommendations.
 - **Strongly recommended** after every fire, including training burns
- Provide incident rehab appropriate for the level and type of incident.
- Decontamination for all apparatus, equipment, and station.
- The district reviews these steps regularly to ensure they are kept up to date.

Training

- The district provides regular training in the following areas:
 - Carcinogenic hazards encountered during fire events.
 - PPE or protocols necessary to reduce carcinogenic effects during fires.
 - Requirements to use proper PPE at all fire events.
 - Proper decontamination methods of PPE and individual firefighter, on-scene and in quarters.
 - Proper routine decontamination for apparatus, equipment, and station.
 - Benefits of personal wellness: fitness, nutrition, sleep, and regular medical evaluations.