

FIREFIGHTER DECON

What Is The Goal

Firefighters at the scene of every fire should have gross decontamination done immediately after leaving IDLH environments. Not having adequate decontamination puts you and everyone at risk of carcinogen exposures.

How Do I Start

Healthy In Healthy Out highlights several simple changes all Fire Departments can implement to reduce your risk of exposure.

Where Do I Find Information

The Washington State Council of Firefighters created a Standing Committee on Health & Safety to work on issues most important to our member's wellbeing. The best place to start is on our public website.

Navigate the pages on the website dedicated to our Health & Safety to find resources that will help provide solutions to protect your health and reduce exposures to known carcinogens in our workplace.

Information can be found at:

washingtonfirefighter.org



Reduce Your Risk of Cancer

The fire service has recognized that firefighters are being diagnosed with cancer at alarming rates and has been aggressive to protect our members on numerous issues. Many states have passed Presumptive Disease laws to help those members who unfortunately have cancer, though more needs to be done to reduce the risk at the source of exposure. The influx of petroleum-based consumer goods the last several decades has created a toxic soup of carcinogens when they off gas at fire scenes that significantly increase our exposures.

Starting with our new recruits to those stalwarts that protect our communities, all firefighters should recognize they are at risk of cancer unless they help guide our profession to better practices. Help your brothers and sisters while also yourself; check out the resources we have compiled on our website to industry leading ways to reduce your exposures on the job.

Key Concepts

- Removing contaminants with a brush or hot water, soap and brush prior to removing SCBA mask reduces exposures.
- Bagging all protective gear, including SCBA, reduces cross



Resources Available

The WSCFF Health & Safety Committee has compiled numerous resources to help you implement best practices to decontaminate firefighters at fire scenes. Reducing exposures at the time of call help keep our apparatus and stations clean.

The list of resources on the website include:

- Proper cleaning procedures and sample policies to prevent further contamination of personal protective equipment
- Cost of hot water wash retrofit on existing fire apparatus
- Numerous policy examples and guidelines for decontamination at fire scenes
- Building a decon kit for your apparatus to reduce cross contamination

The Committee will continue to keep the website section dedicated to firefighter health and safety updated with new information. Contact the committee to look at other issues of concern to our members not on the website, please email them at health@wscff.org.

contamination to your co-workers and family

- Using wet wipes immediately after removing SCBA mask and shower as soon as possible remove

Healthy In Healthy Out

A committee led by Beth Gallup, IAFF Local 1747, guided the creation of Healthy In Healthy Out, a publication and video highlighting ways to protect ourselves from exposure to carcinogens. The fire ground is full of known carcinogens and removing those from PPE and your skin immediately will greatly reduce exposure. The publications guide simple solutions to reduce exposures and decon best practices. Visit the website to download the publication or watch the video.

Fire Service Cancer STATS & FACTS

Three key firefighter cancer studies conducted over the last decade* have all shown elevated levels of certain cancers among firefighters compared to the general population. In at least two of these studies, significantly increased risks were observed in one or more age groups studied or in all firefighters for the following cancers:

COLON	NON-MELANOMA SKIN CANCER
LUNG	PROSTATE
MELANOMA	RECTAL
MESOTHELIOMA	NON-HODGKIN'S LYMPHOMA
MULTIPLE MYELOMA	STOMACH

Source: IAFF
* Studies: "Cancer risk among firefighters: A review and meta-analysis of 32 studies," 2006; "Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of U.S. firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago, and Philadelphia (1950-2009)," 2013; "Cancer incidence among firefighters: 45 years of follow-up in five Nordic countries," 2014.

61

Percent of line-of-duty firefighter deaths from 2002 to 2016 caused by occupational cancer, according to the IAFF

190

Number of Boston firefighters who have died from occupational cancer since 1990

1,053

Number of firefighter line-of-duty cancer deaths reported from 2002 to 2016, according to the IAFF

3 weeks

Average length of time between new cancer diagnoses among firefighters in the Boston Fire Department