

OPERATIONS ROUTINE

TRAINING: CANCER AWARENESS

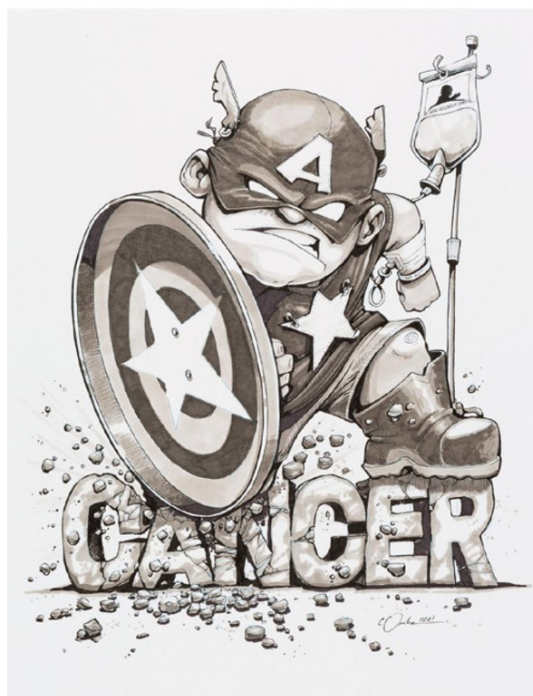
Training, education and recognition of the epidemic of cancer in the fire service has been a goal of the Firefighter Cancer Support Network for many years. It is imperative that new generations of fire fighters are made aware of the large impact that cancer has on fire fighters during their career as well as into retirement. The following list highlights some of the topics that are taught during these cancer awareness outreach classes. This curriculum should be taught at every recruit school and reviewed annually at every fire department. WAC 296.62 also requires an awareness of the hazards of carcinogens on the job, and annual refresher training is required prior to entering any live fire training scenario or actual fire scenario.

- Fire Department Accident Prevention plans as required by WAC 296-305-01505 should include mitigation techniques associated with the hazards of occupational cancer.
- Carcinogenic hazards of chemicals encountered on the fireground, including local and systemic toxicity
- Benefits of personal wellness efforts, including exercise, nutrition and annual physicals
- The most common types of cancer in the fire service that fire fighters are more likely to develop than the general population: multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, esophageal cancer, brain cancer, colon cancer, prostate cancer, skin cancer and testicular cancer
- Supporting research and findings demonstrating the scope of cancer in the fire service
- Laws and standards applicable in the specific state and jurisdiction regarding cancer in the fire service
- Common exposures and chemicals that pose a risk to fire fighters
- Methods of reducing exposures to carcinogens at incident scenes
- Benefits of Personal Exposure Reduction, such as hand, face and neck washing on scene
- Methods for cleaning turnouts and self-care after an incident
- Methods of documenting exposures after an incident
- Education on exposures and cancer risks before any training or incidents that have the potential to expose fire fighters to known carcinogens, asphyxiates, poisons, irritants and allergens
- Provision of all appropriate PPE to minimize exposures
- Requirements to use all appropriate PPE to minimize exposures
- Recommendation that all staff who participate in the training of fire fighters conform to the practices listed in this document

DOCUMENTING EXPOSURES FOR INDIVIDUALS

The National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer is a program established by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to gather information about the occurrence of cancer among fire fighters. This registry aims to improve the understanding of the impact of firefighting on the risk of developing cancer and to inform preventive efforts to reduce that risk. By collecting data from individuals and fire departments across the country, the registry provides a comprehensive and standardized picture of cancer among fire fighters. This information can help identify areas where additional research is needed and inform the development of protective measures and policies to reduce the risk of cancer among fire fighters.

The importance of the NFR lies in the fact that fire fighters face a higher risk of developing cancer than the general population due to the nature of their work. Fire fighters are exposed to a variety of cancer-causing substances and toxins in smoke, soot and ash that can be absorbed through the skin and inhaled. A centralized database of information on fire fighter cancer cases will help researchers better understand the relationship between firefighting and cancer and develop effective strategies to reduce the risk of cancer in this population. The registry also will provide valuable information to fire fighters, fire departments and public health officials, allowing them to make informed decisions about cancer prevention and occupational safety.





The Personal Injury, Illness and Exposure Reporting System (PIIERS) was created in 2014 by the Washington State Council of Fire Fighters and is designed to follow fire fighters throughout their career and into retirement. It is a one-stop place to record injuries, illnesses and exposures experienced while on the job. Usage history will follow members throughout their career, even if they have multiple employers. Personal information always will be confidential and safeguarded; only the user will have access to personal information.

As a PIIERS user, one can track their exposures to chemicals, smoke, toxins and diseases throughout their career. The system also can be used to track work-related injury claim information such as sprains, strains and broken bones, along with illnesses such as any cardiac events. Users have access to the results of preventive and wellness exams in the PIIERS program as part of a complete health history. Before annual physicals, users can download a report including current exposures to share with their doctor. A fire fighter's PIIERS report may show changes over time and throughout their career.

For the WSCFF, PIIERS provides the ability to run reports on non-protected and generic information to track trends and develop health education or prevention materials. PIIERS also can be used for legislative and safe workplace initiatives. PIIERS will continue to have a place in the confidential storage of important information during fire fighters' careers that will be easy to access and easy to input.

Help yourself and fellow fire fighters by documenting injuries, illnesses and exposures while on the job. To access PIIERS or the National Firefighter Registry, visit these websites:

PIIERS | wscff.org/piiers

NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER REGISTRY FOR CANCER | cdc.gov/niosh/firefighters/registry.html