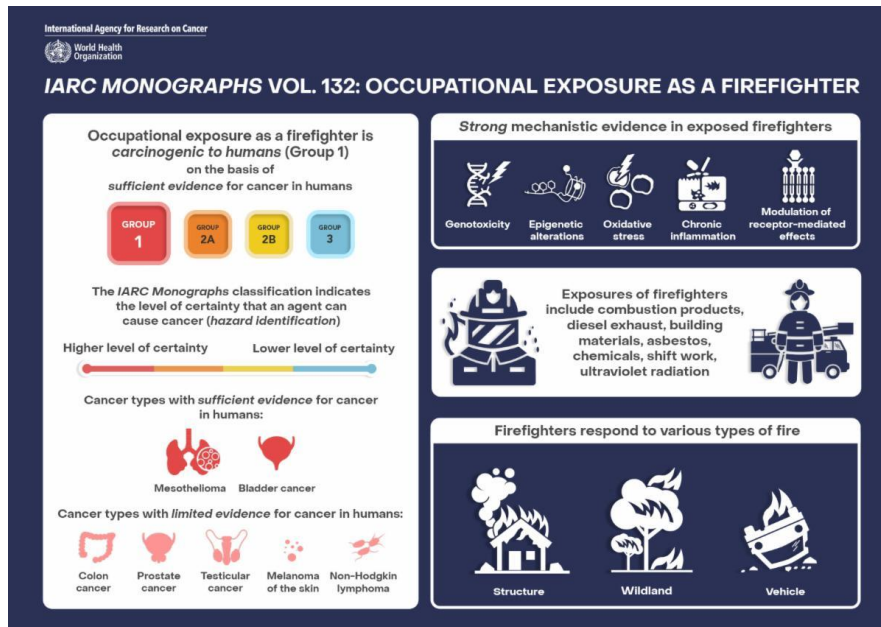




FIREFIGHTER
CANCER
SUPPORT
NETWORK

**International Agency for
Research on Cancer (IARC)
Update**



July 1, 2022, - Occupational Exposure as a firefighter carcinogenic to humans.

Yesterday, the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), following an in-depth review of the current literature by 25 scientists from eight countries issued a statement summarizing their findings that classifies firefighting as carcinogenic to humans.

This decision changes a 2007 decision that firefighting was possibly carcinogenic to humans (group 2b) and will reclassify firefighting in the upcoming volume of the IARC monographs as carcinogenic to humans (group 1). Dr. Sara Jahnke, chair of the FCSN research advisory council says "The updating of the IARC monograph is a significant event for the fire service worldwide. The classification and comprehensive review of the existing literature will have far reaching impacts for cancer coverage, practice and policy. We are all indebted to the scientists who dedicated their time and talents to the report."

The decision comes following the review of over 52 cohort and case control studies, 12 case reports, and seven meta-analyses. Researchers examined more than 30 cohort studies from Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia. Their work in Lyon, France developed a clearer understanding that fires, building materials, personal protective equipment (PPE), firefighter roles and responsibilities have resulted in substantial changes in firefighter exposures over time. The report summarizes that firefighters' complex occupational exposures are genotoxic, cause epigenetic changes, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation,

and modulate receptor-mediated effects that can lead to cancer. Dr. Judith Graber, Rutgers University researcher and working group member said “importantly, these findings apply to all firefighters - including any type of career or volunteer who have prepared for and taken part in fire control activities. So, reducing cancer risk is vital across the fire service”.

The work conducted by the working group scientists demonstrates that the firefighters’ exposures to known and suspected carcinogens like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, soot and asbestos provide the evidence needed to associate mesothelioma and bladder cancer as two of the highest risk to firefighters, Additionally, there is also more limited evidence that colon, prostate, and testicular cancer and melanoma and non-Hodgkin lymphoma are impacting firefighters due to occupational exposures. Dr. Jeff Burgess a working group invited specialist, and member of the FCSN Health advisory council said “The IARC designation that firefighting is carcinogenic is important. We need to use this determination to strengthen our efforts to prevent cancer in the fire service, continuing collaborative research to identify effective interventions.”

This summary provides an enormous amount of credibility to the message the FCSN has been delivering for over 10 years through education. It also validates the need for firefighters to pay closer attention to the controls and practices that have come from the research conducted across the world. Additionally it demonstrates that we need additional research to help find new ways to reduce the occupational exposures firefighters face.

The findings will be published in volume 132 of the IARC monographs later this year. You can view the summary at [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045\(22\)00390-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(22)00390-4) . The FCSN is grateful for our dedicated researchers that have spent countless hours working to understand the exposure that firefighters face and how we can work together to find solutions that are practical and work to reduce our risk for cancer.

Firefighters can find educational resources and more at the FCSN website. <https://firefightercancersupport.org/>

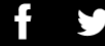
Our vision is to be the global leader in
firefighter cancer support, awareness
and education.

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