



RECLASSIFICATION OF FIREFIGHTING THROUGH IARC

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is an intergovernmental agency under the World Health Organization (WHO) that focuses on conducting research into the causes of cancer, identifying factors that increase the risk of cancer and developing strategies for cancer prevention. The agency also provides guidance to governments and health organizations on cancer-control policies and strategies.

As stored energy devices become increasingly common, the associated hazards, such as thermal runaway and toxic gas release, pose greater risks to fire fighters.

Visit wscff.org/hiho for more information.

ABOVE: This IARC table helps to explain the inherent risks associated with “occupational exposure as a fire fighter causes cancer.” Sufficient evidence also was found for increased risk in fire fighters for mesothelioma and bladder cancer, and limited evidence for several other cancers.

In 2022, leading cancer experts conducted a thorough investigation and analysis that resulted in IARC’s declaration that “occupational exposure as a fire fighter is carcinogenic to humans based on sufficient evidence of cancer in humans.” This signifies that the risks and hazards that fire fighters encounter in their line of work are comparable to highly potent cancer-causing agents such as benzene, tobacco and asbestos. The IARC’s reclassification of this profession as a Group 1 carcinogen carries significant implications for fire fighters, policymakers and those responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of fire fighters in their roles. This highlights the critical need for proactive measures to minimize exposure to carcinogens, along with ongoing research and advocacy efforts to support the health and welfare of fire fighters.

Group 1: The agent is *carcinogenic to humans*. This category is used when there is *sufficient* evidence for cancer in humans. In other words, there is convincing evidence that the agent causes cancer in humans. The evaluation is usually based on the results of epidemiological studies showing development of cancer in exposed humans.