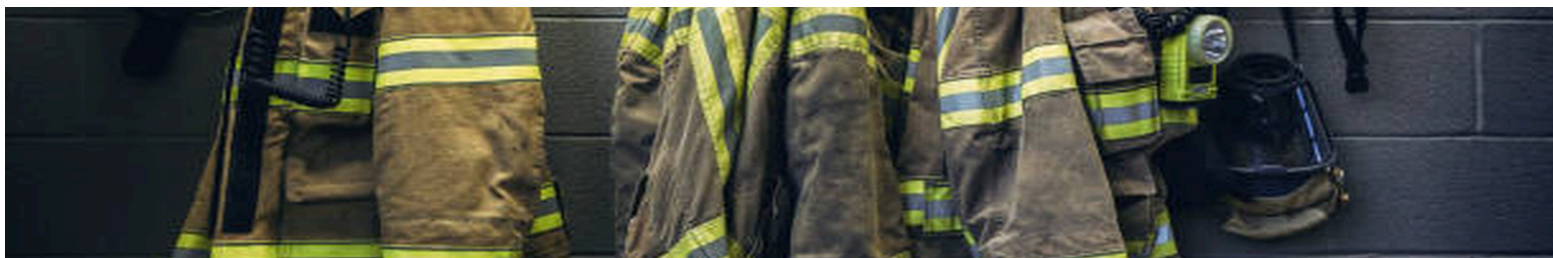


## CANCER AWARENESS & PREVENTION



### What You Need To Know

**Cancer is now the leading cause of death among firefighters. It's a cold, hard reality.** This profession exposes you to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and combustion byproducts that can linger on gear, skin, and equipment. This month, the focus is on practical ways to reduce exposure, detect early, and support each other in the fight against occupational cancer.

A study done in 2013 found that firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer. They also have a 14% higher risk of death from cancer compared to the general population. This risk is higher due to a variety of factors, including:

#### **EXPOSURE TO:**

- Carcinogenic chemicals in smoke and soot.
- Diesel exhaust in fire stations.
- Burning plastics and synthetics.
- Absorption through the skin, especially at the neck, groin, and wrists.

#### **CONTAMINATION OF GEAR AND PPE:**

- Toxic residues cling to turnout gear, gloves, hoods, and SCBAs.
- Contaminants can be inhaled and absorbed long after the fire is out if not properly cleaned.
- Off gassing in apparatus cabs and lockers also pose an ongoing threat.

However, these toxins aren't the only factor putting firefighters at a great risk for cancer. Additional factors include:

#### **CHRONIC SLEEP DEPRIVATION**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies night shift work as a probable carcinogen.
- Chronic sleep deprivation impairs your immune system, making it difficult to prevent abnormal cell growth.

#### **CHRONIC STRESS**

- Long-term stress can affect immune function and hormone regulation.

- Chronic psychological stress has been linked to immune system suppression, increased inflammation, and hormone imbalances such as cortisol dysregulation.

#### **POOR NUTRITION OR DIETARY HABITS**

- Irregular meals, fast food and late-night eating can increase cancer risk over time.
- Diets high in processed meats, sugar filled drinks, or low in fiber and vegetables are linked to colon and rectal cancers, pancreatic cancer, and obesity related cancers.

#### **ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

- Alcohol is known as a carcinogen.
- Firefighters are at an increased risk of social or stress-related drinking.
- Alcohol is linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon.

### Prevention Starts at The Station

Cancer prevention starts with you and how you advocate for yourself at the station. Tips for how to prevent are:

- Wash hands after touching contaminated equipment or surfaces (especially PPE).
- Shower and change clothes after exposure to any hazardous environment, such as a structure fire, gas leak, etc.
- Keep contaminated or hazardous materials out of living areas.

**Print out the handout linked here to hang up in your station for helpful reminders!**

Need tips for how to prevent exposure to cancerous materials at a fire incident? **Click on the handout linked here to keep handy as reminders for how to decon at a fire.**

**Learn more about occupational cancer in the attached lineup drill!**



### Dr. Kelsey Loftus

**Certified Athletic Trainer  
MCFR Health & Injury Prevention**

Did you know that you have someone working within MCFRS to provide you with quality injury care, injury prevention, and functional assessments to lengthen your time on the floor and keep you out of FROMS?

#### **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!**

Starting this year, all station visit requests will be submitted through the link attached to the QR code below. Any station in any battalion can sign up for a station visit with the choice of activities, now including:

- In-station injury clinic
- Sleep health and hacking round table discussion
- Trigger point release work
- Group instruction on prevention of common injuries (low back pain, shoulder immobility, or any area of your choosing!)
- And more!

Have an individual question about an ache or pain? Make an appointment through the link at the bottom of this page!\*

**\*ALL APPOINTMENTS ARE SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL AND CANNOT EFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO STAY ON THE FLOOR WORKING!**



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**Concentra**

**CLICK HERE TO MAKE AN INDIVIDUAL APPOINTMENT!**

# Cancer Prevention Lineup Drill

**Cancer is now the biggest threat for firefighters.** Small steps, lifestyle changes, and awareness can help you in preventing occupational cancer. Take time to educate yourself and others.

## PREVENTATIVE ACTION

**Wear SCBA through overhaul**

**Gross decon on scene**

**Clean gear & hoods after every fire**

**Keep contaminated gear out of living quarters**

**Shower within an hour post-incident ("Shower within the hour")**

**Regular medical checkups with your PCP and cancer screenings**

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES

**Stay physically active**

- Aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous activity.
- Exercise can help regulate hormones, reduce inflammation, and reduce stress which plays a powerful role in immune health and cancer resistance.

**Eat a clean, anti-inflammatory diet**

- Reduce processed meats, added sugars, and fried/charred foods. Many of these have been linked to cancer.
- Hydrate with plenty of water, not sugary drinks or energy drinks with multiple additives that have been linked to cancer risk.
- Prioritize whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats.
- Not sure where to start? [Read about how healthy eating can be a lifesaver for firefighters by clicking here](#) or scanning the QR code.

**Manage stress and mental health**

- Chronic stress leads to immune suppression and harmful behaviors like overeating, smoking, and drinking.
- Consider starting talk therapy, looking into acupuncture (covered by county insurance!), or research ways to tackle your mental health with the [MCFRS Mental Wellness team linked here](#) or scan the QR code.

**Prioritize rest and quality sleep**

- Check out the [handout linked here and through the QR code to learn more about how you can hack your sleep at home and on-shift!](#)

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### Maryland Presumptive Disability Law

**Do you know what cancers are covered under workers compensation in Maryland?** At present, the following cancers are presumed to have occurred in the line of duty and are compensable: leukemia or prostate, rectal, throat, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, brain, testicular, bladder, kidney or renal cell, thyroid, colon, ovarian, or breast cancer. **Click or scan on the QR code for the Maryland presumptive laws listed through the IAFF website.**



### Contaminated Gear: At a Fire Incident & at the Station

Check out these handouts provided by the Firefighter Cancer Support Network for helpful reminders on how to deal with contaminated gear at a fire incident and at the station. **Click or scan on the QR codes for pdf printouts.**



At a Fire Incident



At the Station

### FREE Cancer Awareness Course

**Did you know that the IAFF provides a FREE, 30-minute e-learning course on cancer?** Learn more about cancer in the fire service, exposures and known carcinogens, personal risk factors, and best practices to prevent exposures. **Click or scan on the QR code to register.**



### National Firefighter Registry for Cancer

**The National Firefighter Registry is a voluntary registry open to every firefighter in the US, not just those with cancer.** This survey is aimed at tracking types of cancer, evaluate how exposures relate to cancer risk, and more. Interested in participating? **Click or scan on the QR code to learn more.**

