



ARIZONA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION
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Team Lead, National Firefighter Registry for Cancer (NFR)
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

RE: National Firefighter Registry for Cancer

Dear Dr. Fent,

Firefighting is a hazardous occupation. In addition to the potential for injuries, heat stress, shift-work, sleep disruption, and psychological stress, firefighters are exposed to toxic combustion byproducts.⁽¹⁾ Several studies show that firefighters' have an increased risk of cancer.⁽²⁻⁴⁾

In 2022, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) completed their evaluation of the carcinogenicity of occupational exposure as a firefighter, which they have now classified as a group 1 *known human carcinogen*, based on sufficient evidence for cancer in firefighters for mesothelioma and bladder cancer. There was also limited evidence for several other cancers: colon, prostate, testicular, melanoma of the skin, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma.⁽⁵⁾

Still, more in-depth and comprehensive research is needed to better understand specific cancer risks and occupational risk factors among all types of firefighters, including volunteer firefighters, female and minority firefighters, and subspecialty groups of the fire service, like fire cause investigators, airport rescue firefighters, wildland firefighters, and fire instructors.

To better understand the link between firefighting and cancer, the U.S. Congress directed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create the National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer. The NFR is a voluntary registry of all U.S. firefighters, not just those with cancer. The project is being led by the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which has the knowledge, expertise, experience, and resources to lead this type of project. The NFR will be used to monitor and better understand cancer among firefighters in the U.S.

With broad participation, the NFR will be able to:

- Track cancer diagnoses (including rare types of cancer) among a diverse group of firefighters throughout the U.S.

- Explore cancer risk between different groups of firefighters, including sub-specialties of the fire service
- Evaluate how exposures, including those from large or unusual incidents, relate to firefighters' cancer risk
- Evaluate how control interventions relate to firefighters' cancer risk
- Investigate whether firefighters' risks for different cancers are changing over time

Participation in the NFR is voluntary. However, it is the position of the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) that all firefighters—structural and wildland, career and volunteer, active and retired, and those with and without cancer—should take part. The AFCA especially encourages firefighters all over the country to take time to enroll in the NFR. Having broad and diverse participation is critical to the success of the NFR.

By supporting the NFR, the AFCA hopes to learn more about the health risks firefighters' face. Information gleaned from this project will be useful to fire departments, fire service organizations, standard-setting organizations, and policy makers throughout the country and will ultimately help reduce cancer risk among firefighters.

Sincerely,



Jake Rhoades
President
Arizona Fire Chiefs Association

Sources

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2. **LeMasters, G.K., A. Genaidy, P. Succop, J. Deddens, T. Sobeih, H. Barriera-Viruet et al.:** Cancer risk among firefighters: a review and meta-analysis of 32 studies. *J. Occup. Environ. Med.* 48(11): 1189-202 (2006).
3. **Daniels, R.D., T.L. Kubale, J.H. Yiin. et al.:** Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of US firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia (1950-2009). *Occup Environ Med.* 71(6): 388-97 (2014).
4. **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC):** Painting, Firefightings, and Shiftwork, IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, vol.98. *Worth Health Organization.* Lyon, France (2010).
5. **Demers, P.A., D.M. Demarini, K.W. Fent, et al.:** Carcinogenicity of occupational exposure as a firefighter. *Lancet Oncol.* 23(10) 985-986 (2022).