



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement From IAFF General President Edward A. Kelly on PFAS Lawsuits Filed in New York and Massachusetts

“The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) supports the latest legal challenges filed by fire fighters in Massachusetts and New York alleging that the per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances – so called ‘forever chemicals’ also known as PFAS -- in fire fighters’ personal protective equipment (PPE) caused their illnesses, and that the corporations who sell the products are engaged in a ‘continuous and ongoing public deception’ regarding their risks.

“What we have known for a while and what the public is starting to learn is that there is also another hazard lurking that threatens the health and well-being of fire fighters in every firehouse in the United States and every fire hall in Canada. The protective turnout gear that fire fighters wear contains PFAS, which are used to increase water resistance and are in the moisture barrier and on the outer shell of fire fighters’ protective gear. PFAS have also been identified as ‘possibly carcinogenic’ to humans by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). The correlation between fire fighters and elevated cases of cancer is not by coincidence.

“It is the position of the IAFF, representing more than 326,000 professional fire fighters, paramedics and emergency medical dispatchers across the United States and Canada, that PFAS play a direct role in contributing to the increased incidence of cancer among fire fighters.

“To reaffirm our position, delegates assembled at the 2021 IAFF Convention overwhelmingly adopted two resolutions directly related to this subject:

- **Resolution 28**

Calls on the IAFF to no longer accept sponsorships or advertising from the chemical industry, textile manufacturers or personal protective equipment (PPE) manufacturers that use toxic chemicals in PPE, recommends an end to the practice of repurposing used or expired PPE and calls on the IAFF to publish information on PFAS based on research by independent scientists with no connections to the PPE industry.

- **Resolution 31**

Calls on the IAFF to actively oppose the use of PFAS in turnout gear and to seek independent testing of PPE currently available to determine levels of PFAS and the ability of the chemicals to penetrate skin, to seek cooperation with manufacturers to immediately cease the use of PPE containing PFAS and urges the IAFF to apply for a federal grant to study the negative health effects of PFAS in PPE.

“The position of the IAFF is clear: the health and safety of our members is non-negotiable, period. If manufacturers refuse to acknowledge and work to remove these toxic chemicals from the protective gear fire fighters wear, our members have no other viable remedies than to challenge these practices in court.

“Our members will not waver in protecting their health and safety. This is a crucial and necessary step to finally remove these toxic chemicals from our turnout gear.”

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About the International Association of Fire Fighters

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) is the driving force behind nearly every advance in the fire and emergency services in the 21st century. With headquarters in Washington, DC, and Ottawa, Ontario, the IAFF represents more than 326,000 full-time professional fire fighters and paramedics in more than 3,500 affiliates. IAFF members protect more than 85 percent of the population in communities throughout the United States and Canada. Learn more at www.iaff.org.