



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

NEWS RELEASE

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Fire Fighters' Union Files Suit to Halt Toxic Turnout Gear Testing Standard

The legal action seeks to hold the NFPA liable for standard requiring "forever chemicals" in fire fighter gear

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) filed a lawsuit today against the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for its role in imposing a testing standard that effectively requires the use of carcinogens in fire fighter protective gear. The case, *International Association of Fire Fighters v. National Fire Protection Association, Inc.*, was filed in Norfolk County Superior Court in Dedham, Massachusetts.

Toxic per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are found in fire fighter bunker gear and have been linked to cancer, the leading cause of fire fighter death. Nearly 75 percent of those honored at the 2022 Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial died of occupational cancer.

The complaint seeks to hold the NFPA liable for its Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting (Standard 1971). The standard – which establishes minimum levels of protection from thermal, physical, environmental, and biological hazards faced during firefighting – calls for using PFAS in the middle moisture barrier of fire fighter bunker gear to satisfy the NFPA's Ultraviolet Light Degradation Test. The standards committee deliberately chose the time of exposure to UV light. A shorter exposure time would allow numerous other materials to pass, but a longer exposure time would allow no materials to pass. The set 40 hours is the threshold where only PFAS

passes, meaning all fire fighters must wear bunker gear that is laden with dangerous chemicals.

“The very gear designed to protect fire fighters, to keep us safe, is killing us,” said IAFF General President Edward Kelly. “Standard 1971 needlessly requires the use of PFAS in fire fighter gear. Even when presented with independent science on the health and safety risks, the NFPA has refused to help save our lives. The IAFF has a duty to protect our members' health and their families' wellbeing.”

The IAFF has retained three nationally recognized law firms, Motley Rice LLC; Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC; and Sullivan Papain Block McGrath Coffinas & Cannavo P.C., in its effort to combat cancer in the fire service. The firms, collectively known as the [PFAS Law Firms](#), are available to assist IAFF members made sick by PFAS exposure at work.

“The NFPA has a unique role in promulgating standards that eliminate fire-related deaths and personal injuries while also protecting fire firefighters. Our client alleges NFPA conspired with the PFAS industry and abdicated its solemn obligation to North American fire fighters and it seeks to stop this alleged conduct,” stated T. David Hoyle, Motley Rice attorney.

“Getting cancer is not a job requirement to serve in our communities as a fire fighter. These chemicals do not need to be in the gear that protects our fire fighters. This case is a step to preventing unnecessary cancers that threaten our heroes,” said Simmons Hanly Conroy shareholder Daniel P. Blouin.

“Fire fighters risk their lives each day to protect the public. They should be able to rely upon the safety of the bunker gear that they don each day. Instead, they have been unknowingly and unnecessarily exposed to PFAS. This lawsuit seeks to protect fire fighters everywhere by ensuring the safety standards are set by science and not special interest,” said Sullivan Papain managing member Thomas J. McManus.

ABOUT THE IAFF

*The **International Association of Fire Fighters** is the driving force behind nearly every advance in fire and emergency services in the 21st century. With headquarters in Washington, D.C., and Ottawa, Ontario, the IAFF represents more than 334,000 professional fire fighters and EMS professionals. Its members protect more than 85 percent of the population throughout the U.S. and Canada.*

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