

FIRE FIGHTER CANCER AWARENESS MONTH: TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA



- Occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service.
- From 2020 to 2024, occupational cancers accounted for 307 of the 330 line-of-duty deaths (93%) among Canadian IAFF members.
- Fire fighters are exposed to toxic chemicals in a combusted state while performing their duties, posing serious risks even when proper protective equipment is used. Cancer can result from years of cumulative exposure to these toxins, or from a single significant exposure to hazardous chemicals.
- In 2022, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classifies firefighting as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), IARC's highest carcinogenic hazard classification. This classification puts firefighting on par with tobacco and benzene as carcinogenic to humans.
- The IAFF is committed to providing fire fighters with the best possible methods of prevention to reduce their risk of cancer and supporting those with a cancer diagnosis.
- January was formally proclaimed Firefighter Cancer Awareness Month in 2023 when MP Sherry Romanado's Bill C-224 became law. The IAFF is grateful to MP Romanado and to all who have joined the fight against our profession's number one danger.
- Bill C-224 also led to The National Framework on Cancers Linked to Firefighting, a comprehensive strategy to reduce cancer's toll on firefighting that's being developed in partnership between Health Canada and stakeholders like the IAFF.
- Every province and territory has laws presuming certain cancers to be occupational for fire fighters under workers' compensation, with some statutes including minimum service periods or other qualifiers.
- Throughout January, we will be raising awareness of the cancer epidemic in the fire service by providing resources on the following topics:
 - Cancer risks and exposures
 - Screening and early detection
 - Lifestyle and wellness
 - Behavioral health and cancer diagnosis
- Resources include factsheets, infographics, survivor stories, and more.
- Learn more at iaff.org/cancer-awareness-month.

