

FIRE FIGHTER CANCER AWARENESS MONTH: TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA



- Occupational cancer is the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service.
- At the IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in September 2025, nearly 80% (79.4%) of those honored – 247 of 311 members – died of occupational cancer.
- 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.
- 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.
- All 50 states, including the District of Columbia, have laws presuming certain cancers to be occupational for fire fighters under workers' compensation, with some statutes including minimum service periods or other qualifiers.
- The IAFF and Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN) are 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.
- 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.

