

# Protecting Fire Fighters From PFAS

The IAFF supports further research on the health effects of PFAS in firefighting equipment and grants to develop safe alternatives to PFAS.

## BACKGROUND

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) have been identified as harmful substances after decades of use in thousands of everyday items. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has declared PFAS to be a toxic substance, determining there is no safe level of PFAS within the human body. Toxic PFAS enters the body through inhalation, absorption and ingestion, and remains in the body for two to nine years following exposure. PFAS is linked to a growing list of health concerns, including thyroid, bladder, kidney and liver cancers, diabetes and elevated cholesterol.

Fire fighters experience long-term occupational exposure to PFAS due to the use of aqueous firefighting foam (AFFF), a fire

suppressant agent, in firefighting and training exercises. PFAS has also been used in personal protective equipment to make gear water resistant and protect fire fighters from steam burns.

To date, there has been limited research on the impact of personal protective equipment containing PFAS on fire fighters' health. The Guaranteeing Equipment Safety for Firefighters Act would help advance research into this important health and safety issue.

## LEGISLATION

**Senate:** [S 2525, the Guaranteeing Equipment Safety for Firefighters Act](#)  
Sponsors: Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH); Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO)

**Summary:** The Guaranteeing Equipment Safety for Firefighters Act would direct the National Institute of Standards and Technology to work in partnership with NIOSH to conduct a comprehensive study of the personal protective equipment worn by fire fighters. The legislation also establishes a grant program to advance the development of safe alternatives to PFAS in PPE.