



Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness and Prevention



TRAINING BRIEF

Cancer Prevention Best Practices for PPE

DISCUSSION

Fact:

Many firefighters believe that a dirty set of PPE is a badge of honor, but in fact, contaminated PPE is making firefighters sick. Occupational cancer has become an epidemic. One of many steps a firefighter can take to protect themselves is to keep PPE clean and follow recommendations set forth in NFPA 1851.

Key Points:

- PPE should not be worn in any living areas of the fire station.
- Clean PPE after exposure to carcinogens and every six months.
- Store PPE away from diesel exhaust.
- Follow NFPA 1851 recommendation on retirement of PPE.
- Have a second clean set of PPE available.

General Guidelines:

Structure fire PPE should undergo advanced cleaning at a minimum of every six months or as soon as possible after clothing has been subject to contamination (NFPA 1851 7.3.4; 2020 version).

Clothing should be kept in good repair with no rips, tears or holes.

All PPE should be prohibited from inside the living areas of the fire station. It is recommended to have two sets of wildland and structural PPE ensembles for each member (hoods, gloves, etc.).

Cleaning:

NFPA standards identify and define three primary types of cleaning:

- Preliminary Exposure Reduction
- Advanced
- Specialized

Soiled and contaminated PPE should NOT be taken home to be laundered or washed in public laundry places.

Advanced cleaning should be done by trained personnel or an independent service provider (ISP).

Storage:

PPE should be stored in away from any diesel exhaust, which is a known carcinogen.

Retirement of PPE:

PPE should be retired if it:

- Is more than 10 years from the date that the element was manufactured
- Is damaged beyond repair or not cost effective to repair.
- Is contaminated to the extent that it is not possible or cost effective to decontaminate
- Has been exposed to chemical, biological, radiation, nuclear (CBRN) or terrorism agents