



Emergency Management and Response Information Sharing and Analysis Center

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Media Advisory

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USFA URGES CONTINUED VIGILANCE BY FIREFIGHTERS TO AVOID EXPOSURE TO CARCINOGENS AND OTHER TOXINS

Washington D.C.-The United States Fire Administration has completed its review of a recently released study conducted by the TriData Division of the System Planning Corporation, analyzing firefighter presumptive cancer legislation and attempting to prove or disprove a correlation between firefighting activities and the occurrence of cancer. While this study is considered thoughtful and well-presented, its results are scientifically inconclusive, and indicate that more expansive study is in order.

Acting United States Fire Administrator Glenn A. Gaines noted, “The results of this report clearly indicate that more study and analysis is necessary. It is much too early to abandon presumptive laws and benefits for firefighters who present with cancers. To make such a quantum leap at this point in time may be premature.”

Added Administrator Gaines, “What is appropriate at this time is continued vigilance on the part of all firefighters to limit their exposure to toxins and known carcinogens by use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), by proper decontamination of PPE and other equipment, and by use of diesel exhaust removal strategies in fire stations throughout our nation.”

As a long time partner of all of the nation’s firefighters and fire service organizations, USFA has regularly and continually supported research efforts, specific training, and other initiatives focusing on firefighter wellness and safety issues.

“As with all truly professional disciplines, the fire service must be willing to support independent third party research and reviews of our profession as well as its actions and approaches,” said Administrator Gaines. “Just as importantly, and like other professions, we must also focus on prevention and mitigation strategies limiting exposure to toxins and carcinogens by firefighters, be they career or volunteer.”

Such strategies can include public education efforts to reduce the occurrence of fires, and mitigation strategies that include adequate enforcement of fire and life safety codes. Additional mitigation strategies include the installation of fire sprinkler systems in all types of occupancies, including residences, throughout our nation.

Future research efforts in the area of firefighter cancer must recognize the myriad dangers faced by firefighters throughout our country, be it asbestos in the older factories of the east, chemical and plating plants in the Midwest, or wildland fires that occur each year throughout the country.

Any future studies must include methodologies to adequately recognize those firefighters who have already experienced legacy exposures, and must include definitive measures of the effectiveness of the improved PPE, decontamination equipment, and diesel exhaust systems placed in service over the past decade.

Those fire departments lacking appropriate equipment to avoid and limit such exposures are encouraged to seek assistance and funds from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program which presently is accepting applications for funds. The AFG Program has already and dramatically improved the safety of firefighters since the program came into existence by valuing such safety initiatives and providing federal funds direct to local fire departments to assist them in such efforts.

USFA stands ready and willing to assist with any new research efforts that can positively impact on firefighter safety and wellness in our nation.

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