

Committee on Public Safety and Security
Raised Bill No. 7120
LCO No. 5396

An Act Concerning Firefighter Turnout Gear, A Firefighter Cancer Screening Pilot Program
and Grants for Removal of PFAS from Fire Apparatus.

Position: Support Raised Bill 7120

Good Morning Committee Chairs, Senator Gasten and Representative Boyd, Vice Chairs, and Ranking Members Cicarella and Howard. Thank you for raising Bill No. 7120, An Act Concerning Firefighter Turnout Gear, A Firefighter Cancer Screening Pilot Program and Grants for Removal of PFAS from Fire Apparatus and allowing me to Testify of behalf of the Burlington Volunteer Fire Department.

My name is Jeffrey Bond, I am a Retired Physician Assistant, Volunteer Firefighter and EMT for the Burlington Volunteer Fire Department.

Occupational Cancer is killing Firefighters in Connecticut and across the Country. A recent report provided by United Diagnostic Services (UDS) noted in their ultrasound testing in 8 Connecticut Fire Departments found 146 high risk findings (935 screenings) or 16 percent of those screened. Firefighters face a 9 percent increase in a cancer diagnosis, and a 14 percent increase in cancer related deaths than the remaining US population. In 2017, the Connecticut State Commission of Fire Prevention and Control estimated that there were 26,800 Firefighters in Connecticut, 22,350 were Volunteer and 4,450 were career firefighters.

Firefighters are dying from cancer and we don't know the true number of those that have been affected. We are a cancer Cluster. The International Agency on Cancer Research (IARC) lists Firefighting as a group 1 Carcinogen! If we look at the UDS results for High-Risk findings from Connecticut, almost 1 in 5 Firefighters had a High Risk finding. Nearly all the national research on Firefighter Cancer has been finding what are the carcinogens and reducing our risk. While good for research, no specific studies have been conducted on Firefighter Cancer Screening.

So, what is the missing link in reducing Firefighter Mortality from Occupational Cancer. It is a specific Cancer Screening Guideline that is age adjusted for the hazardous environment Firefighters must operate within. We never know when our 911 event will happen. We must screen firefighters for cancer with a universal guideline recommended with the assistance of physicians who are the clinical experts on all cancer care and treatment. We must start Firefighter Cancer Screening today. No Excuses. This Screening Guideline is for all Firefighters! In addition, no data exist in Connecticut that can identify how many volunteer firefighters have cancer, received cancer treatment or died from cancer. In one Connecticut Volunteer Fire Department, they have had four firefighters with cancer. That information is not recorded in a researchable in any data base

Raised Bill No. 7120 will ensure that Connecticut Firefighters will get a defined Cancer Screening Guideline. It will ensure that all Firefighters will be represented in the Pilot Study. As I close, there are two things to remember, Cancer Screening Saves Lives and Cancer Screening is cost Effective.

Thank You for consideration of Establishing a Pilot Firefighter Cancer Screening Program for all Connecticut Firefighters.

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Call for Action
We Must Screen Firefighters for Cancer
No Excuses

Firefighters are dying of cancer and we are “Insane”. The current Standards for occupational cancer screening in the Fire Service are only “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. The Fire Service needs a comprehensive, collaborative cancer screening guideline that covers all Municipal, Volunteer or Hybrid Firefighters. What can you do today

1. Follow the Lavendar Ribbon Report Best Practices for Preventing Firefighter Cancer. All Eleven recommendations, All the Time. No excuses.
2. Get your cancer screening. Use the following guideline as your template for screening with your Healthcare Provider.
3. Participate in firefighter cancer research and join the National Firefighter Registry (NFR).
4. Listen to your Spouse or significant other.
5. You can survive cancer. Early Detection and Diagnosis (EDD) will save lives. Together we can stop killing firefighters.
6. The National Fire Service Organizations that provide Standards for Health, Safety and Leadership must adopt a comprehensive Firefighter Cancer Screening Guideline in 2025. No excuses its insanity.

Universal Firefighter Cancer Screening Guideline Needed

Dangerous Link Between Firefighters and Cancer

INTRODUCTION: *Firefighters Have Increased Risk of Developing Occupational Cancer*

Research suggests that firefighters have an increased risk of different types of cancer due to smoke and hazardous chemicals they are exposed to in the line of duty. There have been multiple studies that have highlighted this increased risk. According to the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), occupational cancer is the leading cause of death in the fire service. They reported that 72% of IAFF member line-of-duty deaths were the result of occupational cancer.²

Foundation research, on the occupational cancer risk to firefighters, provides evidence that firefighters have a greater risk for developing cancer than the general population. The National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) states that firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer than the general population.³ Occupational cancer amongst firefighters is not limited to the United States. International researchers have evaluated the carcinogenicity of occupational exposure related to firefighters. This research has determined that certain exposures, as a firefighter, are carcinogenic.¹

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) define a cancer cluster as “a greater-than-expected number of cancer cases that occurs within a group of people in a defined geographic area over a specific period of time.”⁴ The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimated there were approximately 1,041,200 career and volunteer firefighters in the United States.⁵ This suggests that occupational cancer amongst firefighters could be considered a cancer cluster.

Further research groups, like the National Firefighter Registry (NFR), are in the early stages of collecting data on firefighter cancer.

THE PROBLEM: *There Is No Universal Firefighter Cancer Screening Guideline*

Challenges related to firefighter cancer screening include the following:

1. Currently, there is no universal firefighter cancer screening tool that exists within the US Fire Services.
2. There is no accurate count of the number of firefighters who die each year from occupational cancer or begin cancer treatment. The IAFF has a mechanism to record cancer fatalities of their members. However, volunteer firefighters have no such registry that can provide an annual accounting of cancer deaths or a new cancer diagnosis.
3. State cancer registries may not contain data about volunteer firefighters. Volunteer firefighters' information is likely to be excluded because firefighting is not their primary occupation.
4. Research on firefighter cancers is severely outdated. The principal research was conducted between 1950 – 2009. It is imperative that firefighters participate in new and ongoing firefighter cancer research.
5. The Fire Service Organizations - which offer leadership, medical or safety standards - have not provided a unanimous comprehensive firefighter cancer screening guideline.

PROPOSAL: *Implement Guideline For Universal Firefighter Cancer Screening*

Reducing firefighter cancer deaths is a multifactorial problem. Like with many forms of cancer, no one act or treatment will cure this problem. Early Detection and Diagnosis (EDD) is universally accepted as the foundation for better cancer outcomes. Benefits of EDD include improved long-term outcomes, reduced healthcare cost, improved quality of life and survivorship. The most important tool needed in the fire service today is a dedicated Firefighter Cancer Screening Guideline. Below is an overview of the potential solution:

1. Institute a formal Firefighter Cancer Screening Guideline in collaboration with a Cancer Center Designated by the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The Guideline should define best practices for firefighter cancer screening. This screening tool should be a unanimous guideline that is reviewed annually and adjusted for the firefighter’s occupational exposure to carcinogens and be formally recognized by the collaborating Cancer Center. It must account for all firefighters whether a municipal, volunteer or a hybrid fire service. It will include cancer screening for all firefighters regardless of age, sex or ethnic background.

An example provided below was a collaboration with the Hartford healthcare Cancer Institute and initiated by the Burlington Volunteer Fire Department.

The Burlington Project		
Age	Screening Test	Frequency
18	Hepatitis B & C	Once (or at Initial Department Physical)
21	Pap Smear (including self-pap)	Every 1-3 Years
25	Melanoma Cancer Screening	Annually
30	Mammography/Ultrasound (High Risk see note)	Annually
35	Abdominal Ultrasound	Every 5 years
35	FIT (hemocult test)	Annually
35	Lo-dose Chest CT Scan	Every 5 years
35	Colonoscopy	Every 5-10 Years
40	PSA (blood test)	Annually
40	EsoGaurd	Once

2. The Fire Service - in collaboration with a Cancer Center Designated by NCI - should identify a Cancer Navigator to assist the firefighter after a cancer diagnosis by a medical provider.
3. Require all cancer registries to report anyone who responded with a fire service that has a reportable cancer death or new diagnosis. This data should include a minimum number of years of fire service, interior or exterior functions, and type of service (municipal, volunteer or hybrid).
4. Firefighters must have access to screening tests. Our cancer screening tests must have evidence-based results and research before testing firefighters. Clinical support for approved cancer screening testing should be in collaboration with an NCI Cancer Center.

5. Fire Service Organizations - that offer leadership, medical or safety standards- must provide a comprehensive firefighter cancer screening guideline by 2025. This guideline must be made available to all firefighters.

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