



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

EDWARD A. KELLY
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Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization

Virtual Press Conference

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Hello, my name is Patrick Morrison and I am the Assistant to the General President for the department of health safety and medicine at the International Association of Fire Fighters.

I am here today to speak about the how the EPA excluded legacy asbestos from the Toxic Substances Control Act chemical evaluation process and the 2013 National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) study that identifies fire fighters as a greater risk of developing mesothelioma caused by asbestos exposures on the job.

- Occupational-related cancers now account for over 65 percent of fire fighter line-of-duty deaths each year as reported to the IAFF. This is the largest health-related issue facing the firefighting profession.
- Contributing to our high rates of occupational-related cancer, are our exposure to toxic chemicals which include Asbestos.
- Fire fighters face a high risk of asbestos exposure, because asbestos becomes airborne when disturbed or damaged by fire.
- Despite these known exposures, the EPA has excluded the legacy asbestos from the chemical risk evaluation.
- Our members enter burning buildings, extinguishing fires, and then opening walls and ceilings to check for fire extension; these tasks expose fire fighters to asbestos fibers. Often members are unaware that a building contains asbestos.
- These activities are daily occurrences, and while the asbestos is legacy, these are technically new uses and new exposures for our members.
- After the initial exposure, asbestos fibers can remain on the turnout gear and station clothing and spread to apparatus cabs and fire stations.

- Fire fighters can inhale large amounts of these microscopic fibers, and unknowingly increase their risk of developing an asbestos-related disease such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis.
- According to TSCA, the term 'susceptible subpopulation' means a group of individuals within the general population who may be at a greater risk than the general population of adverse health effects from exposure to a chemical substance or mixture, such as children, pregnant women, elderly and *workers*.
- Based on the fact that fire fighters frequently enter buildings filled with asbestos and performing fire suppression activities typically without knowing this exposure is present, the firefighting occupations falls under the category of susceptible subpopulation.

The **2013 NIOSH Cancer study** also identifies fire fighters as a susceptible sub population.

- This a cohort study, where they evaluated 30,000 fire fighters over a 60-year timeframe.
- **The multi-year study was the first study to identify that the fire fighters in the study had a rate of mesothelioma two times greater than the rate in the U.S. population as a whole.**
- Also, the findings show that malignant mesothelioma is largely attributable to asbestos exposure, with sparse evidence of other causes.

In closing, we believe that the EPA should evaluate fire fighters as a susceptible subpopulation, and evaluate legacy exposure in their chemical risk evaluation process.

Thank you

Patrick Morrison
International Association of Fire Fighters
Assistant to the General President, for Health and Safety
1750 New York Avenue, Washington DC, 20006

pmorrison@iaff.org
202-824-1570