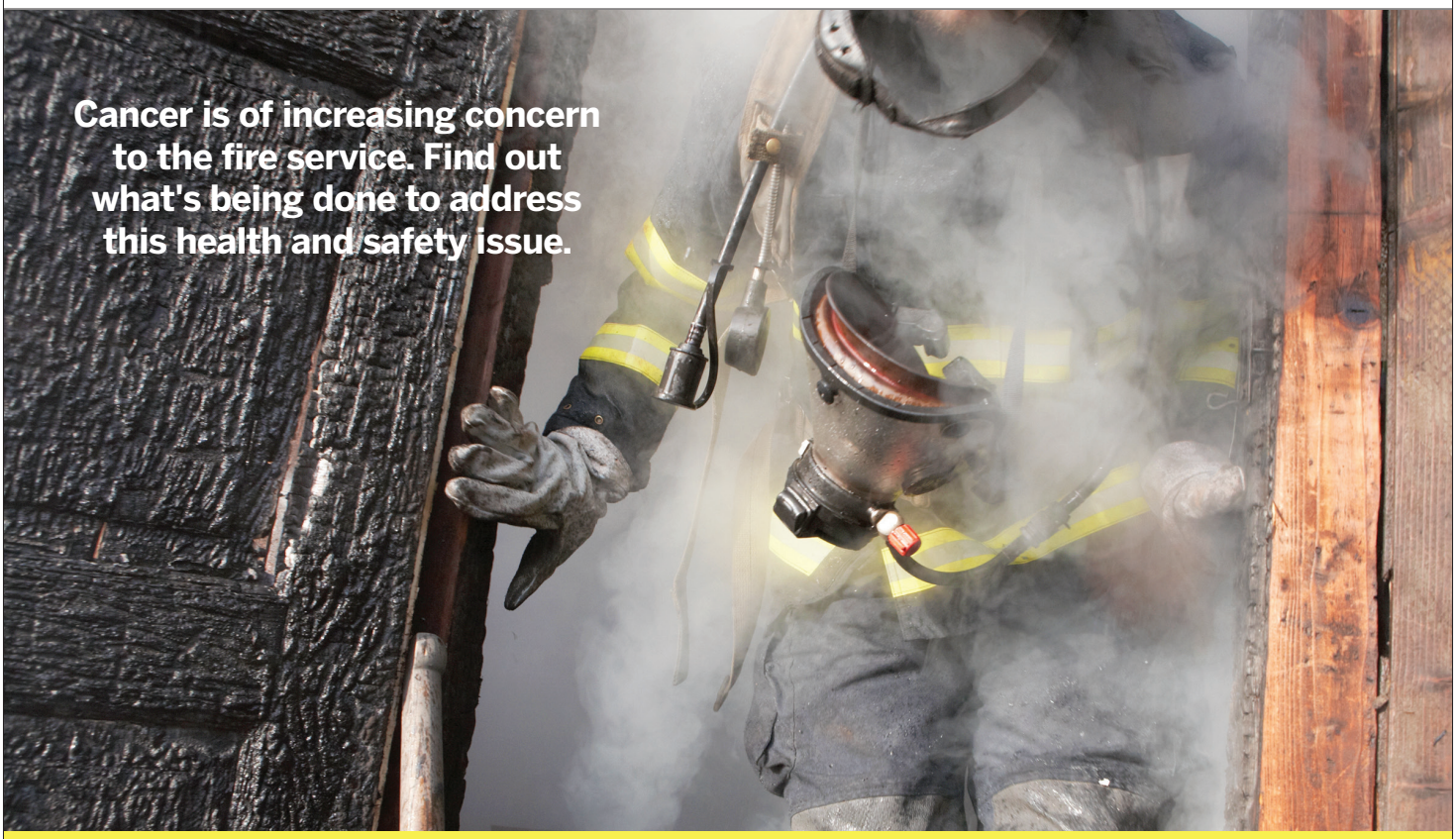
# FACT SHEET: Cancer Risk in Firefighting




**WITHIN THE FIRE SERVICE,** not using SCBA and wearing soiled PPE were long considered badges of fire fighter toughness and bravery. For many fire fighters, those perceptions have been costly, and in some cases deadly. Fire fighters who for years didn't regularly wear SCBA or clean their personal protective equipment (PPE) after returning from fire fighting incidents have developed various forms of cancer, including lung cancer, and other long-term illnesses. There are even cases of young fire fighters with far fewer years of contaminant exposure have received cancer diagnoses as well.

*Minimum Contaminant Risk and Exposure* (ON BACK) ▶

## Recommended Resource

- *Healthy In, Healthy Out: Best Practices for Reducing Firefighter Risk of Exposures to Carcinogens* is a comprehensive resource developed by the Fire Cancer Support Network State (FCSNS) Washington chapter. Visit www.fcsnwa.org

**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION**
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards

# FACT SHEET: Cancer Risk in Firefighting *(continued)*

## Minimizing Contaminant Exposure and Risk

Fire service organizations and individual fire departments have become increasingly aware of the health and safety hazards posed by contaminant exposure, and have been working to educate the fire service about ways to reduce those risks.

At the Fire Protection Research Foundation – the research affiliate of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) - three major initiatives are under way to address fire fighter exposure to contaminants on the fireground and beyond:

**How Clean is Clean:** While general PPE cleaning procedures have evolved as best practices, scientifically established methods for removing toxic chemicals, biological pathogens and other hazardous substances from PPE is lacking. "Validation of Cleaning Procedures for Fire Fighter PPE" (a three-year study due in late 2018) works to identify the contaminants found on PPE and the disinfection/sanitization procedures required to remove them. (See nfpa.org/ppecleaning)

**Contamination Control and Beyond:** It's quickly becoming recognized that contaminants found on fire fighter PPE are also present far from the fire ground: on hand tools, fire hose, apparatus, stations, and beyond - sometimes even into private vehicles and the homes of fire fighters. The "Campaign for Fire Service Contamination Control" (a one year- study due in late 2017) aims to educate the fire service about the health and safety risks of contaminant exposure in all these locations, and to provide steps for controlling contaminants' spread.

**Long-term Cancer Study:** Medical doctors and others don't fully understand which exposures are responsible for cancer in fire fighters, the mechanisms by which exposures cause cancer, nor the most effective means of reducing exposures. The "Fire Fighter Cancer Cohort Study" is a long-term (30-year) information collection effort led by the University of Arizona to fully address these questions. Updates will be provided at intervals throughout the study's duration.