



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, July 26, 2024

# City of San Diego Joins Local Fire Chiefs in Unified Effort to Reduce Cancer Exposure

## SAN DIEGO FIRE-RESCUE AND OTHER AGENCIES CALL ATTENTION TO FIREFIGHTER CANCER RISKS

SAN DIEGO – In an effort to show a unified front in reducing firefighter exposure to the risk of cancer, many fire chiefs and representatives from fire agencies throughout San Diego County will attend a news conference on Tuesday, July 30. The group will call attention to the potential risks posed by personal protective equipment - called turnouts – that firefighters are required to wear.

Since 1971, the National Fire Protection Association standard for firefighter personal protective equipment (PPE) has included per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), also known as “forever chemicals.” Current research shows that PFAS can be found in all three layers of turnout gear and these chemicals can be inhaled, absorbed and ingested. The World Health Organization has found sufficient evidence to classify occupational firefighting as a group 1 carcinogenic.

Over the past 10 years, 152 SDFD firefighters have been diagnosed with occupational cancer.

**“It would be impossible to remove all cancer exposure risk in one fell swoop; however, incremental steps to reduce risks are important,” said Fire Chief Colin Stowell. “The agencies in our region are committed to following research guidelines and doing everything we can to keep our firefighters healthy and free from cancer.”**

Firefighters cannot fight fires without the appropriate PPE or turnout gear. Fire agencies are currently looking for alternative turnouts that provide necessary protection and do not contain PFAS. In the meantime, it is the position of all fire departments in the county of San Diego that turnouts be used only for firefighting and not for fundraisers, community events or other non-essential activities.

The next fundraising event in our region is the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, presented by the [San Diego Firefighter Relief Association](#), which also supports this position. While the turnout gear has traditionally been used at this event, beginning this year turnouts will not be worn at the stair climb.

- WHAT:** News conference regarding essential use of turnout gear.
- WHO:** Chief Colin Stowell, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department  
Chief Bent Koch, Heartland Fire & Rescue  
David Hunt, Cancer and Health Coordinator, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department  
Brandt Truver, President, San Diego Firefighter Relief Association
- WHEN:** Tuesday, July 30, 2024, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.
- WHERE:** Heartland Fire Training Authority  
1301 N. Marshall Ave.  
El Cajon, CA 92020
- VISUALS:** Interviews with fire chiefs and personnel from multiple fire agencies within SD County.  
At least ten fire apparatus.  
Heartland Fire Training Authority training facility grounds.

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