

2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

Occupational Cancer Prevention

The VPFF urges the Virginia General Assembly, either through budget amendment or legislation, to provide funding for preventative cancer screenings for all Virginia firefighters.

Background:

In 2024, 75% of all firefighter line of duty deaths resulted from occupational cancer. Due to occupational exposures to carcinogens, firefighters have a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer than the general population. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has recognized working as a firefighter to be a Group 1 “Carcinogenic Exposure,” the same level as tobacco smoking or unprotected exposure to radiation.

While firefighters and localities are doing everything they can to minimize exposures, it is nearly impossible to eradicate cancer in the fire service. However, early detection of occupational cancer is critically important to saving firefighter lives. Early detection is also critical in minimizing the fiscal implications of cancer on firefighter families and their employers.

Needed Action:

By passing funding to provide cancer screening for firefighters, the Virginia General Assembly can save firefighter lives. This would provide financial resources to reimburse localities for screening procedures, while also requiring localities to provide critical information back to the state. This aggregate data and results on the incidence of cancer in our firefighters will be shared with the Commonwealth and its assigned entities to assist with research and necessary changes to cancer prevention and treatment.

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The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters proudly represents nearly 11,000 firefighters, emergency medical providers and communications officers in over 60 localities across the Commonwealth of Virginia.