



www.firefighternearmiss.com

Report of the Week

**Wear your mask, clean your PPE, and get a physical
02/24/2011**

Report Number: 09-0001144

Report Date: 12/26/2009 10:01

Synopsis

FD physical detects FF's cancer.

Demographics

Department type: Paid Municipal

Job or rank: Captain

Department shift: Straight days (10 hour)

Age: 43 - 51

Years of fire service experience: 17 - 20

Region: FEMA Region VIII

Service Area: Suburban

Event Information

Event type: Other

Event date and time: 12/23/2008 00:00

Hours into the shift:

Event participation: Involved in the event

Weather at time of event:

Do you think this will happen again?

What were the contributing factors?

What do you believe is the loss potential?

- Other

Event Description

I was diagnosed with cancer and through aggressive surgical intervention, I am able to report this as a near-miss. Early diagnosis and detection through a routine department physical, was the key to this near-miss. Exposure to carcinogens during a nineteen year career contributed (in my opinion) to the event. PPE and SCBA are essential in protection from exposure.

Lessons Learned

Use PPE and SCBA. Maintain physical fitness and participate in regular checkups and health screenings.

Wear your mask, clean your PPE, and get a physical.

1 of 3

www.firefighternearmiss.com

Report of the Week

Cancer. Few words in the English language evoke a more gut reaction. Modern medicine is performing miracles in the fight to stave off the number two killer of American adults, but a diagnosis of cancer is still a devastating pronouncement for anyone to hear. The exact cause of the various cancers is often very difficult to pinpoint, since the disease may not appear for many years, even decades after the initial exposure. However, we do know that firefighters are especially prone to contracting cancer due to on-the-job exposures. While the service is embarking on stronger efforts to reduce the exposures, there is still a long way to go to further reduce and eventually eliminate this disease. Report [09-1144](#) tells one story and makes a pointed observation.

"I was diagnosed with cancer. Through aggressive surgical intervention I am able to report this as a near-miss. Early diagnosis and detection through a routine department physical was the key to this near-miss. Exposure to carcinogens during a nineteen year career contributed (in my opinion) to the event. PPE and SCBA are essential in protection from exposure."

There are many excellent resources available to learn more about cancer and to assist those who battle the terrible disease. The IAFC and the IAFF have worked together to stress the importance of a comprehensive fitness and wellness program. Their websites offer many useful resources listed under their Health and Safety sections. Another excellent organization is the Firefighter Cancer Support Network. This organization's website provides educational resources, puts cancer victims in touch with others who have dealt with the difficult struggle and provides other support during diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

In the end, there are several steps you can take to reduce your risk of contracting cancer. The answers can be found in the questions below. Once you have read the entire account of [09-1144](#) and the related reports, consider the following:

1. Does your department provide annual physical exams? Are screenings such as colonoscopies, chest x-rays, prostate exams, and mammograms performed at recommended intervals? When was your last physical exam?
2. Does your department have (and enforce) a no smoking policy?
3. How are hazardous exposures to your personnel documented and tracked? Have you been keeping a log of hazardous exposures that have occurred over the course of your career?
4. Is your firefighting PPE cleaned on a regular basis? Is the cleaning done in house, or are the garments sent to a certified outside vendor? Is this cleaning documented and logged for the department? Does your department allow contaminated PPE to be worn in the station/ living quarters?

5. What further steps can be taken to reduce the cancer risk in your department? Discuss your answers with your colleagues.

Related Reports – Topical Relation: Firefighter Wellness, Cancer Prevention

[06-066](#)

[06-255](#)

[06-285](#)

[09-1000](#)

Submit your report to www.firefighternearmiss.com today so everyone goes home tomorrow.

Note: The questions posed by the reviewers are designed to generate discussion and thought in the name of promoting firefighter safety. They are not intended to pass judgment on the actions and performance of individuals in the reports.