

I am writing to express my strong support for the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer (NFR), a critical initiative led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). This registry represents a significant step forward in the ongoing battle against cancer within the firefighting community.

Firefighting is inherently hazardous, exposing firefighters to numerous risks, including toxic combustion byproducts. Studies have shown that firefighters face an increased risk of developing various cancers, such as mesothelioma, bladder cancer, colon cancer, prostate cancer, testicular cancer, melanoma of the skin, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. In 2022, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) classified occupational exposure as a firefighter as a Group 1 known human carcinogen, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive research and intervention.

The NFR is a voluntary registry designed to monitor and better understand cancer among firefighters in the U.S. By tracking cancer diagnoses and exploring risk factors among a diverse group of firefighters—including women, minorities, and specialized groups like volunteer firefighters, fire cause investigators, airport rescue firefighters, wildland firefighters, and fire instructors—the NFR will provide invaluable data. Such as:

- Track cancer diagnoses, including rare types of cancer, among firefighters nationwide.
- Compare cancer risks between different firefighter groups.
- Evaluate the relationship between exposures from significant incidents and cancer risk.
- Assess the effectiveness of control interventions in reducing cancer risk.
- Investigate trends in cancer risk over time.

Broad participation in the NFR is essential for its success. Therefore, I urge all firefighters—structural and wildland, career and volunteer, active and retired, with or without cancer—to enroll in the registry. Your participation will help gain a clearer understanding of the health risks you face and develop better strategies to protect you and future generations of firefighters.

The enrollment process is straightforward and confidential. It took me under 30 minutes to complete. Follow-up questionnaires will further enhance understanding of risk factors and other critical research questions. Encouraging your fellow firefighters, including retired or former firefighters, to join the NFR is vital for increasing participation and ensuring diverse representation.



As a four-decade member of the firefighting community, I understand the profound impact that cancer has had on our brothers and sisters. By supporting the NFR, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of firefighters and their families. The information gathered will guide fire departments, fire service organizations, standard-setting organizations, and policymakers in developing effective cancer prevention strategies.

Please join me in advocating for the National Firefighter Registry for Cancer. Together, we can combat this devastating disease and protect both current and future firefighters.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Leeb
Deputy Assistant Chief (ret.) FDNY
Managing Director – First Responder Center for Excellence (FRCE)