



CANCER PREVENTION SOG

SCOPE

This SOG establishes a cancer prevention decontamination system that will be employed by all SPFD personnel. This SOG applies to structure fires and any other incident that potentially contaminates our PPE and apparatus. The SOG applies to those firefighter directly involved in firefighting activities or any activities that result in contamination.

PURPOSE

To establish a policy addressing the adequate decontamination of PPE and apparatus and one that prevents cancer.

DEFINITIONS

SHALL – Indicates a mandatory requirement.

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) – Documents that help establish how an organization will operate and how its members are expected to carry out specific duties outlined in general terms.

REFERENCES

GUIDELINES

Background

Cancer is one of the most dangerous and unrecognized threats to the health and safety of firefighters. Multiple studies have repeatedly demonstrated credible evidence for statistically higher rates of multiple types of cancers in firefighters compared to the general American population.

It is not acceptable to return from a medical call with blood or vomitus on clothing and then sit back down to dinner at the station. The same concern should be exercised after returning from a fire. Gear must be cleaned, clothing must be washed and personnel must shower.

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The two routes of greatest concern for entry of carcinogens into the body of a firefighter are:

- Through the lungs: when firefighters do not wear or prematurely remove SCBA, especially during overhaul.
- Not wearing SCBA in both active and post-fire environments is the most dangerous voluntary activity in the fire service today.

Dermal absorption: where toxicants are absorbed through the skin.

Some areas of skin are more permeable than others, specifically the face, the angle of the jaw, the neck the throat and the groin.

The permeability of skin increases with temperature, and for every 5 degree increase in skin temperature, absorption increases 400%

The most permeable piece of personal protective equipment is the hood. Hoods are designed to protect the head and neck from heat but are not designed to stop skin absorption.

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Policy

- A. Use of SCBA shall be required through the completion of the overhaul stage of any incident where IDLH was present.
- B. Clean, protective hoods will be available upon returning to station. Hoods should be swapped out for washing. This applies to any member who was involved in active firefighting or exposed to a contaminant while operating in an IDLH.
- C. Personal "wet wipes" will be stocked on all apparatus to be used after any fire response to clean contaminants from areas of the body prone to absorption.
- D. Bunker gear is not to be worn, placed or stored in the living area of the fire station. Bunker gear should not be used as cold weather gear.
- E. Personnel exposed to an IDLH atmosphere should shower as soon as possible upon return to the station after the incident. Initial showering should be in tepid water to remove all surface contamination. Once surface contamination is removed, water temperature can be increased.
- F. Firefighter protective bunker gear shall be carried in a gear bag when travelling between stations.
- G. An exhaust extraction system should be installed and utilized in each station to prevent diesel exhaust from entering the station or contaminating PPE storage areas.



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- H. Tracking of potential exposure of personnel to the products of combustion shall be accomplished by detailing the events of the incident in the incident report narrative. All firefighters that were involved in active firefighting or potentially contaminated should be annotated.

Procedure

- A. SCBA will be utilized throughout the incident until the conclusion of the overhaul phase. Monitoring will be used to ensure the atmosphere is below permissible exposure limits before the property is returned to the control of the owner. Firefighters shall wear a minimum of an N-95 mask during entry into a structure after overhaul has been completed and monitoring has indicated levels are below established limits.
- B. The potential for injury from fire ground hazards should be weighed against the potential for heat stress injuries, excessive fatigue, etc. If heat stress is a concern but respiratory hazard still exists, allowing the removal of turnout coats but red-donning SCBA should be considered. Only Command can authorize such a reduction in protection.
- C. A wet decontamination of SCBA and bunker gear should be performed if necessary before leaving the scene. The issued PPE cleaning solution should be used as needed for this purpose.
- D. Use issued wet-wipes to remove as much soot as possible from head, neck, and jaw, throat, under arms and hands immediately and while still on the scene.
- E. Command shall have the authority to place units out of service for a short
- F. Period of time so that personnel may return to the station for further decontamination to include showering. Showering should include scrubbing of the areas identified as a high potential for absorption.

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- G. Clothing worn under PPE should be removed immediately upon return to the station and laundered at the station. Do not take contaminated clothing home without first washing it.
- H. Consideration should be given to carrying off-gassing PPE and SCBAs in compartments instead of the crew compartment while returning from a contaminating incident.
- I. Apparatus crew compartments must be deconned if exposed to contaminated gear. This includes the seats, floors and areas where contaminated gear has touched or been placed.
- J. Bunker gear will be cleaned a minimum of twice per year. This can be accomplished during off shift times. Contaminated gear will be cleaned at end of shift to ensure availability for the next shift.
- K. Documentation of potential exposure is paramount to receiving benefits in the event of a cancer diagnosis. The Records Management System (Firehouse) has the capability to track all individual responses during your career. It is imperative that your exposures be documented in the incident reports' narratives.

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