

# Safeguard Firefighter Health Stats and Facts

## FACTS

1. Potential long term health effects that can result from being a firefighter include:

- Cancer, particularly genitourinary (including kidney, ureter, and bladder).
- Back injuries and other strains caused by overexertion and strenuous work.
- Diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis caused by exposure to blood borne diseases; and
- Cardiovascular disease due to a multitude of toxic substances when fighting a fire. For example, carbon monoxide exposure is directly linked with cardiac toxicity.

2. There are myriad factors which can influence if a particular cancer begins to develop in the body. Unhealthy lifestyle habits such as smoking, high alcohol consumption, poor diet, lack of exercise and lack of sleep can increase a person's risk for developing cancers. In addition to these factors, a firefighter is exposed to toxins, the likelihood of cancer developing increases.

## STATS

- According to NFPA 24% of firefighters killed in the line of duty were responding to, or returning from, alarms.
- Statistics data showed that traumatic injury contributed to 6.5% of fatality claims, a rate of 4.4 deaths per 100,000 Canadian firefighters, and 90% of time-loss claims.
- The new analysis, conducted by Surrey Fire Services in British Columbia – Canada shows that Traumatic injuries accounted for 90% of all time-loss claims, affecting approximately one in 50 firefighters each year. Mental

health was the third leading cause of time-loss claims, affecting an average of one in 5,000 firefighters per year.

- There were 135 on-duty firefighter deaths in 2021. Sixty-five were due to COVID.
- Of the 70 non-COVID deaths:
  - Thirty-five were volunteer firefighters, 27 were career firefighters, seven were contractors to state and federal land management agencies, and one was a member of an industrial fire department.
  - The largest share of deaths occurred while firefighters were operating at fires or explosions (28 deaths).
  - Overexertion, stress, and medical issues accounted for more than half of the deaths (40 deaths), including 29 sudden cardiac deaths.
  - Sixteen firefighters died in vehicle-related incidents, including 10 firefighters who died in vehicle crashes and six who were struck by vehicles.