



SYMPOSIUM CPH 2016 STATEMENT

Copenhagen, November 2016

On behalf of the Federation of the European Union Fire Officers Associations (FEU), the Danish Emergency Management Organisation (DEMO), welcomed researchers and firefighters from Europe and North America and participants from the private sector late October 2016 in Copenhagen, to share expertise on firefighters' working environment and safety.

The increased risk of cancer among firefighters, including exposures to cancer-causing chemicals while on the job, how to improve cancer prevention, and presumptive legislation for recognition of work-related cancers in firefighters already in existence in North America and Australia, were the major points of discussion.

The following was stated:

- Firefighters are generally at a greater risk of getting cancer, significantly more than the average population. Nearly every fire, firefighters are exposed to smoke containing dangerous particles and gases. In addition, exposures to cancer-causing substances occur through skin directly from smoke and soot and from clothing contaminated from previous fires.
- Epidemiologic studies consistently indicate a clear connection between firefighting and occupational cancer.
- Proactive risk management is required for all industry in the European Union, but this process has not been applied to systematically reduce occupational cancer hazards within the fire and rescue services in most EU countries.
- Although initiatives, efforts and measures, aimed at reducing firefighter exposure to carcinogens, are being made to prevent cancer; the effectiveness of these actions is currently not known. This does not mean that these initiatives do not work, rather that their effects should be scientifically examined.
- In the United States, the majority of states have presumptive legislation defining certain cancers as being work-related for firefighters. In Canada, since 2002, cancer already has been accepted as a work-related illness and

for more than 10 years, Australian firefighters also have presumptive legislation defining certain cancers as occupational illness as well. These laws support and compensate firefighters who are affected by cancer because of their work. In contrast to North-America and Australia, presumptive legislation for firefighters cancers has not been established for any European country.

Therefore the following was agreed on:

All partners

... propose that a proactive risk management system be developed for firefighter illnesses including cancer and other long term occupational health risks, in order to reduce current risks, gather additional data and determine the effectiveness of firefighter cancer prevention and mitigation programs.

...support the need for more integrated research about reduction of exposures, including improved workplace protocols and personal protective equipment

... recommend the further discussion of presumptive legislation in Europe, to provide improved support for fire fighters with cancer

... recognize a holistic approach and put forward further sharing of information, knowledge and guidelines in this field, connecting all partners regardless of being in the private sector, researchers, firefighters, fire chiefs or other organizations working in this domain

All partners involved find the risk of cancer to be a extremely important issue to solve for the European firefighters, both at an EU level and individually in the member states.

Therefore we advise the policy making authorities to broader evaluation and to recognize already known scientific facts, global knowledge and practice regarding cancer prevention in the fire service in order to bring this urgent health issue on the political agenda as soon as possible.