



For Immediate Release

Date: May 5, 2020

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State Agencies Launch Preliminary Exposure Reduction Project in Illinois

Joint agency effort to reduce cancer risks to Illinois fire service members

Springfield, Ill- The Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI), Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM), and Mutual Aid Box Alarm System Illinois (MABAS) today announced the creation of the Illinois Preliminary Exposure Reduction Project. The project was developed to deliver critical firefighter health and life safety research, education, training and basic equipment to fire departments across the state. The intent of the project is to raise awareness of the increased cancer risks faced by firefighters, provide departments with free basic equipment that can be used for preliminary exposure reduction for personnel on incident response scenes, as well as training on how to properly use those tools.

“Reducing the occupational life safety risks of firefighters is at the heart of the IFSI mission. Educating firefighters about those risks and providing them with the knowledge and tools to mitigate it could not be more important to IFSI or the fire service,” said IFSI Director Royal P. Mortenson.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) can become contaminated after use by a firefighter. Effective on-scene decontamination can reduce the level of surface polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) by 85% following an incident.

“We have come to understand there is a direct link between occupational exposure and cancer. Exposure comes in the form of airborne contamination and particulate present during both emergency and training fire responses. By-products of combustion such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), toxic gases, and other particulate are present inside and outside of a structure, even in the absence of visible smoke,” said IFSI Director of Research Dr. Farzaneh Masoud.

According to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), firefighters face a 9 percent increase in cancer diagnoses and a 14 percent increase in cancer-related deaths compared to the general population. OSFM has provided a grant to the IFSI to help support the development, implementation and purchasing of the products needed for the decontamination buckets.

“The OSFM finds these statistics unacceptable and is dedicated to helping our brothers and sisters reduce their exposure to the risks associated with the burning of synthetic building materials present in today's construction. This grant is meant to help the firefighters of Illinois

minimize their exposure to these carcinogens. We appreciate the work and expertise supplied by our partners at IFSI Research, IFSI and MABAS in this effort” said Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

The training provided by IFSI will help departments effectively use materials provided to decontaminate personnel on-scene. If departments are not able to get a bucket due to limited supplies, information is provided in the training videos and on the IFSI website to help them create their own.

MABAS, who has several regional distribution sites across the state, will be instrumental in acquiring and distributing the materials for the buckets to those designated sites for departments to obtain them.

“MABAS is a proud partner in the Preliminary Exposure Reduction Project in the effort to protect the health of firefighters, and their families, in Illinois. MABAS has received the components of the kits and will work to establish distribution points throughout the State and at the MABAS Readiness Center in Wheeling,” said MABAS Illinois Director Glen Ericksen.

All fire departments within the State of Illinois are eligible to receive free equipment after completion of the training. Supplies are limited, and departments are encouraged to sign-up and to complete the training soon. Training and additional resource information is available at fsi.illinois.edu.

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