



Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

December 2022

Critical Incident/Emergency Management Unit

This is the monthly newsletter for the Albany County Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit. **If you have events that you would like posted in this newsletter please email them to the Fire Coordinator's office.**



NYS Vehicle Rescue Operations Level (VROL)

In this issue

NYS Vehicle Rescue Operations Level (VROL)
Firefighter cancer and PFAS in turnout gear
Training

Office of Emergency
Management

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Albany County Sheriff's Office

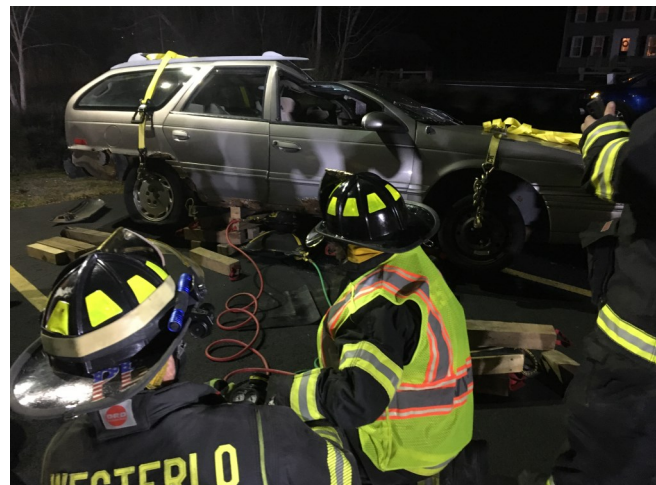
Critical Incident Emergency Management Unit

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NYS Vehicle Rescue Operations Level Class at Onesquethaw Fire

Twenty-nine members of the Onesquethaw, Slingerlands, Westerlo, Fort Hunter and Elsmere Fire Departments along with three staff from Colonie EMS and Albany Medical Center completed the NYS Vehicle Rescue Operations Level (VROL) course in November. Students learned how to stabilize vehicles positioned on all four tires, on the side, and on the roof. Students learned how to use hand tools, power saws, hydraulic extrication tools, air bags, and lifting struts to disentangle victims from the vehicles. Some advanced techniques, including an inverted dash lift were also taught. This technique is used to free a victim's legs pinned under the dashboard when the car is on its roof. Seeing members from fire departments and EMS agencies participate and work together in the course demonstrates the partnership needed to save lives. Congratulations to all who completed the course!

Thanks to SFI Steve DeGroff who taught the class and provided the write-up and photos.



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The San Francisco Standard

SF Firefighters Risk Cancer Every Day— Even Their Jackets Are a Threat



Firefighters battle a three-alarm fire at 3312 Mission St. on June 18, 2016 in San Francisco. | Liz Hafalia/The San Francisco Chronicle via Getty Images

San Francisco firefighters fear the “Cancer Sniper.” It’s how they refer to the deadly disease that struck down many of their comrades.

“You kind of expect, in the back of your mind, to get hit,” said fire department Battalion Chief Matthew Alba. “I didn’t expect to get hit at such an early age, but I did.”

Alba was just 43 when doctors discovered he had a cancerous brain tumor, and two years later, he’s still living with the disease.



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This morning, the San Francisco Firefighters Cancer Prevention Foundation sponsored a department-wide event to screen members for signs of cancer. The event was spurred by a chronic problem for the San Francisco Fire Department, along with departments across the country: Their members keep getting the deadly disease.

Between April 2018 and November 2022, the foundation documented 68 cancer cases among SF's firefighters, including 20 cases that struck active members, according to Adam Wood, vice president of the firefighters' union. Five active firefighters have died of cancer since 2014, Wood said.

Firefighters have a higher risk for all cancers when compared to the general public, especially cancers impacting the respiratory, digestive and urinary systems, studies have shown. They're constantly surrounded by carcinogens—materials that can cause cancer—and that situation has gotten worse in recent decades.

“What burns these days is very different than what burned 30, 40 years ago,” SFFD Chief Jeanine Nicholson said. “It was wood; it was cotton; it was paper. Now it's all petroleum-based stuff that's burning.”

But it's not just burning buildings that threaten firefighters' health: Their own equipment can cause cancer. The flame-retardant protective gear firefighters wear contain carcinogens, explained Tony Stefani, president of the cancer prevention foundation. That includes the iconic protective jackets and pants firefighters wear in the line of duty, called turnout gear.

Nicholson said the department has been working to find replacement protective gear for about five years. It's challenging to find equipment that doesn't contain cancer-causing chemicals but can still stand up to extreme heat. SFFD has begun issuing new turnouts to address the issue, but they're less durable and need to be replaced more often, burdening the department with additional costs, Nicholson said.

As a light drizzle broke out at the cancer-screening event, Alba spotted a firefighter wearing a yellow turnout jacket. Alba called out to his colleague and asked him to take it off, reminding him that it's not a raincoat.



A firefighter enters a smoky building during a simulated structure fire at the San Francisco Fire Department's in-service training facility on Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015. | Paul Chinn/The SF Chronicle via Getty Images

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The jacket was one of the old pieces of gear that contains carcinogens—plenty of the old turnouts are still in rotation, Alba explained. He calls them “cancer jackets,” and says it’s been an uphill battle to get firefighters, who are used to casually wearing their protective gear on cold or rainy days, to stow away the jackets until the moment comes to fight a fire.

It’s part of a larger culture shift the department needs to make.

Back when Nicholson was starting out as a firefighter, veterans used to encourage young members to get into the action and get their turnout coats dirty. Firefighters came back from a fire and walked around the living quarters in the station wearing their turnout pants. At night, they often slept next to their protective gear, Nicholson explained.

“It was a badge of honor to have a smudge of soot on your face,” she said.

In the past decade, the department has changed all that. After a fire, members decontaminate their gear using specialized washing equipment and decontaminate their bodies. The new policies, alongside the introduction of more cancer-free gear and regular cancer screening events, are aimed at stopping the cycle of cancer that has plagued the department.

Despite the grim reason for this morning’s gathering, Alba was all smiles. A steady stream of old friends stopped by to shake his hand and pat him on the back. It felt like a long-needed family reunion, he said, and a welcome change of venue compared to where he usually catches up with his old buddies from the department.

“This opportunity is a celebration where we are all getting together, and it’s not for a funeral,” Alba said. “I’ve lost count of how many funerals I’ve gone to, and I don’t want to ever go to a funeral again.”



A firefighter grimaces after walking out of an apartment building that caught fire on 17th Street on April 21, 2016 in San Francisco. | Lea Suzuki/The SF Chronicle via Getty Images

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Fire Rescue 1 By Lexipol

Chemical in Firefighter Turnout Gear Eyed As Potential Cancer Agent

The EPA phased out domestic manufacturing of PFOA amid concerns of human health and environmental impact

By Karen Hensel • Published September 24, 2018 • Updated on [September 25, 2018](#) at 3:12 pm

What to Know

- Researchers have found potentially carcinogenic compounds that are used as an agent in most American firefighters' turnout gear.
- The EPA phased out domestic manufacturing of PFOA amid concerns of human health and environmental impact.

A chemist says the federal government has been “remarkably absent at the moment” in researching the connection to cancer in firefighters.

For 28 years, Paul Cotter pulled on his turnout gear to battle thousands of fires as a Worcester firefighter.

“We went to every fire in the city,” he said.

His wife, Diane, called him “a fireman’s fireman.”

More than four years ago, he got the worst call of his career. He remembers sitting in his kitchen as he got the news: a pre-op physical detected prostate cancer.

“It took me three days to tell my wife,” he said. “I couldn’t tell her.”

Four years later, after treatment, he is cancer free. But with no family history of cancer, Diane Cotter said she began asking questions. And those questions led her to the protective overcoat and pants firefighters wear on every call.

“Cancer-causing agents do not start at a fire,” Paul Cotter said. “We have chemicals in our gear.”

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For years discussion and research into high cancer rates among firefighters have focused on the smoke as a possible cause. But researchers have found potentially carcinogenic compounds that are used as a water-repellent agent in most American firefighters' turnout gear, as well as in [fire suppressing foam](#).

And federal documents from DuPont, the giant chemical producer and a major manufacturer of the compounds, show that the company researched their impact on humans at least as far back as the 1990s, and feared what regulation could mean for revenue.

No study has been done specifically on a potential link between cancer and use of perfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS), a group of chemicals that includes perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), in firefighters' uniforms.

So Diane Cotter went looking for answers.

She took her hunch and turned it into a lead herself, sending samples of new, never worn turnout gear to be tested.

"Almost instantly we got a signal, and that doesn't usually happen in science," said Graham Peaslee, a nuclear chemist at the University of Notre Dame.

He tested the gear for PFAS, a group of chemicals that some studies have shown to increase the risk of a range of cancers, including prostate cancer.

"There was a lot of it there," Peasley said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, some studies have found workers producing, and exposed to, PFAS have an increase in diseases including prostate, kidney and testicular cancer.

"The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified PFOA as possibly carcinogenic and EPA has concluded that both PFAS and PFOS are possibly carcinogenic to humans," the CDC wrote in a 2017 fact sheet to physicians. "Some studies have found increases in prostate, kidney, and testicular cancers in workers exposed to PFAS and people living near a PFOA facility."

It also noted that more research is needed to clarify what kind of link there is between the compounds and cancer, and that other studies found no correlation.

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The CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health launched a comprehensive multi-year cancer study of 30,000 firefighters in 2010. Among the results, the agency found that "there were more cases of certain cancers among younger firefighters. For example, firefighters in our study who were under 65 years of age had more bladder and prostate cancers than expected."

The EPA phased out domestic manufacturing of PFOA amid concerns of human health and environmental impact.

The U.S. Department of Defense identified 126 military bases where PFOA from firefighting foam had contaminated local water.

PFOA specifically received attention internationally as well.

In 2006, the European Chemical Agency restricted the use of PFOA in textiles including firefighting turnout gear, and in 2012 the chemical was designated a "substance of very high concern," meaning it is subject to restrictions in Europe.

"We are at the point in time where the firefighting community, emergency responders, the folks that may have been exposed to these materials for decades ought to be really demanding this information," said Robert Bilott, an environmental attorney who has been fighting use of the chemical.

The New York Times has called Bilott "DuPont's worst nightmare" after he successfully sued the chemical giant, one of the primary domestic producers of PFOA, 17 years ago over water in West Virginia polluted with PFOA.

A year ago, Bilott sent a 196-page letter to the EPA, the CDC, the U.S. Attorney General's Office, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, an agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, demanding national testing and studies of firefighters exposed to PFOA.

"Even though the toxicity of these chemicals has been well-known by certain manufacturers for quite some time, it is not something that was told to the people who are actually using these materials," Bilott said.

Public documents show that DuPont has researched potential links between PFOA and cancer.

In 1997, a paper written by DuPont scientists show they studied PFOA and potential connection to testicular and pancreatic tumors. The conclusion was that

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the origin of the cancers was “not completely understood,” but “the relevance to humans cannot be completely ruled out.”

Meanwhile, DuPont, in an annual report filed with the federal Securities and Exchange Commission in 2006, warned shareholders that attempts to regulate PFOA would hit them financially.

“Products currently manufactured by the company representing approximately \$1 billion of 2009 revenues could be affected by any such regulation or prohibition,” the company wrote in its report. “DuPont has established reserves in connection with certain PFOA environmental and litigation matters.”

Dian Cotter said she feels DuPont has deceived her.

“DuPont stands shoulder to shoulder with us at your firefighter cancer symposiums and they’ve never once mentioned PFOA in the amounts we now know to be in the turnout gear,” she said.

In a statement, DuPont said it “no longer makes, uses or buys PFOA, and cannot comment on these materials.”

The company referred NBC10 Boston to Chemours, a chemical company and spin-off of DuPont that makes a PFOA replacement called Gen-X. Chemours did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Peaslee said the federal government has been “remarkably absent at the moment” in researching the connection to cancer in firefighters.

For example, \$100 million was just been approved in the Defense Department’s budget for a nationwide health study and to fund a cleanup of PFAS in the water around military bases. But firefighters were not included in the study.

That omission will be addressed at a hearing by the U.S. Senate’s Committee on Homeland Security in Washington, D.C., Wednesday.

Meanwhile, some states are regulating PFOA on their own.

Washington State was the first to specifically pass a law designed to protect firefighters. That law bans the chemical from firefighting foam and requires any fire gear with the chemical to carry a warning.

And the Boston Fire Department plans to send turnout gear to be tested this fall.



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Fire Rescue 1 By Lexipol Firefighters rally in DC to demand more regulation of toxic chemicals

**"Now we know our own gear is part of that problem,"
IAFF General President Edward Kelly said about PFAS**

Sep 21, 2022

By Leila Merrill

WASHINGTON — Firefighters, IAFF leaders and other protesters rallied Tuesday at the nation's capital to demand that the government do more to regulate toxic chemicals that harm communities and kill firefighters.

At the Scientists, Activists, and Families for Cancer-Free Environments (SAFE) rally, people marched to the Environmental Protection Agency's headquarters, some speakers talked about cancer clusters' appearances, and IAFF General President Edward Kelly discussed occupational cancer and PFAS in the fire service.



Firefighters participated in the SAFE EPA rally Tuesday in Washington. (Photo/IAFF)



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“For many years we thought our cancers were caused by smoke, off-gassing from burning combustibles, building debris,” Kelly said, [according to and IAFF news release](#). “Now we know our own gear is part of that problem. The very thing that is supposed to be keeping us safe is costing us our lives.”

The IAFF and the Metropolitan Chiefs Association [issued a joint statement](#) in August advising their members of the health risks associated with firefighter turnout gear. The groups also offers advice on [limiting exposure from the gear](#).

One of the firefighters at the rally, Jason Burns, former president of Fall River, Mass. Local 1314, said several members of his affiliate have developed and died from occupational cancer.

“We have a problem in the fire service, and it’s not just my local, it’s happening all over the country,” Burns said. “Firefighters are dealing with cancer at rates we have never seen. I have seen too many widows and too many fatherless children now. I am no longer going to tolerate having these chemicals in my gear.”

The Biden administration classified PFAS as [hazardous](#), and the EPA recently issued guidance [limiting the acceptable amounts of PFAS](#) in drinking water.

“President Biden’s actions will help us protect our communities,” said Kelly.

Kelly urged the EPA to **ban** the production, sale, and importation of PFAS.

Retention and Recruitment Car at Midway Holiday Parade



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2023



WINTER GAMES

FEBRUARY 3 - 5, 2023

Event Venues:

Green Peak Ski Resort
2000 Route 392, Cortland, NY 13045
(807) 835-6111

Park Center Alumni Arena at SUNY Cortland
1 Folmer Drive, Cortland, NY 13045
(807) 753-4961

Friday



Tube Racing

Schedule of Events

*Times are approximate, and may be subject to change based on weather and number of participants.

7:00 PM

Team registration at Greek Peak Ski Resort. Drink tickets available.

Saturday



Tug-O-War

8:30 - 9:30 AM

Registration for Day's Events at Greek Peak Adventure Park and Tubing Center.

- All teams must register.
- All team members must wear PPE to registration and once you have a tubing ticket, head to the tubing hill.

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Firefighter Obstacle Course / Stokes Basket Carry

- Location in the parking lot next to the Adventure Park and Tubing Center

11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Hose Relay at Greek Peak

- Location in the parking lot next to the Adventure Park and Tubing Center

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

During The Break, Please Make Sure To Grab a Bite!

- Tailgating is encouraged.
- Prizes awarded to best set-up and best crockpot dish.



Bonfire

1:30 - 4:30 PM

Tug-O-War at Greek Peak

- Location in the parking lot next to the Adventure Park and Tubing Center

4:00 PM

Bonfire

- Be sure to pack your camping chairs for smores around the campfire!

Sunday



Broomball

7:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Broomball Tournament

Park Center Alumni Arena at SUNY Cortland

- 7:00 - 7:30 AM Registration - Captains sign your team up at Alumni Arena
- 7:30 AM Games start - off the ice by 1:00 PM

Awards Ceremony

- Following the Broomball Tournament

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Long Island Metro FIRE/EMS EXPO

FEBRUARY 3-5, 2023
NASSAU COLISEUM • UNIONDALE, NY

The **New York State Association of Fire Chiefs** and the **Islip Town Fire/EMS Museum Educational Center** have partnered once again to deliver this exciting emergency services exposition and educational event on Long Island. More than 3,000 first responders turned out for our inaugural event in 2022, which featured 120 vendors and fire/EMS lectures presented by some of the most prominent leaders in the emergency services field.

The 2023 Long Island Metro Fire/EMS Expo will feature even more vendors displaying apparatus, tools, equipment, and services for fire and EMS agencies, as well as nine 90-minute educational seminars for fire/EMS responders of all ranks. This event benefits the [museum](#) and the association, supporting their shared mission to serve the fire and emergency services personnel of Long Island and New York state. [Email](#) questions to NYSAFC.

Attendee Registration:

\$20 per person, per day (*includes entry to the expo and seminars*)

FREE parking!

Tickets are available online through [Ticketmaster](#) (service fees will be applied).

Tickets can be purchased at the door (cash, credit card, and voucher accepted).

If paying by voucher – departments can provide NYSAFC with the voucher and a roster in advance OR submit the voucher and use a sign-in sheet on-site. NYSAFC will bill agencies at

Exhibit Hours for 2023:

Friday, February 3: 3:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 4: 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 5: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Education Hours for 2023:

Friday, February 3: 3:00 – 6:15 p.m.

Saturday, February 4: 9:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Sunday, February 5: 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Education Program Schedule:

Coming Soon!

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ANNUAL EMS CONFERENCE

Each year, the FASNY Emergency Medical Services Committee presents the EMS Conference in Selden, New York. The one-day event is packed with presentations that address the most contemporary and critical topics in the EMS community.

These invaluable sessions are complemented by a Pre-Conference Workshop eligible for Core CME credit hours in toxicology, cardiology, respiratory, psychiatric and EMS operations, among others.



UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2023 | SELDEN FIRE DEPARTMENT

The State of Emergency Medical Services in New York State
Presentation by Bureau of EMS, NYS Department of Health and NYSEMS Council

Albany County Training

ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #12 2022 is now available on our website .

<https://www.albanycounty.com/home/showpublisheddocument/23089/638052300723030000>

There is now a link on our website with instructions on how to get an LMS sign on ID . We recommend that all new members should register as soon as they join so they have access to training opportunities.

ALBANY COUNTY FIRE TRAINING SCHEDULE #12 2022

Pre-Registration Required: Students may register by clicking on the Learning Management System link on the NYS OPFC Home Page ([NYS Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services - OPFC](#))

Registration opens 45 days before the first class

COURSE	LOCATION	DATE	INSTRUCTOR	PREREQUISITES
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Please Note that a training authorization letter is now required for all courses offered by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations with Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations IN PROGRESS	Westmere	August 15, September 8, 15, 20, 22, 27, October 4, 8, 22, 26, November 2, 7, 9, 15, 19, 21, 28, December 7, 13, 14, 19, 20 Weeknights: 1830-2130, Saturdays: 0800-1400 Units 21-25 1800-2200	Molesky	None
Basic Exterior Firefighting Operations with Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations IN PROGRESS	East Berne	October 3, 11, 13, 17, 19, 25, 27, 29, November 2, 5, 8, 10, 14, 16, 22, 28, 30, December 6, 8, 12, 14, 20, 27 Weeknights 1830-2130 (Hazmat 1730-2130) Saturdays 0800-1400	Santabarbara	None
Principals of Instruction IN PROGRESS	Elsmere	November 7, 14, 21, 28, December 5	Clawson	None

Rescue Technician Basic IN PROGRESS	Selkirk FD Station #1	November (23 & 30: 1830-2130) December 8: 1800-2200, December 17: 0800-1700	Kerr	None
Hazardous Materials Technician Modules 1,2 & 3	West Albany	November 29, 30 December 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14 Weeknights 1830-2230 Saturday 0800-1600	OFPC	Hazardous Materials First Responder Operations & SCBA Qualified
FFS: CONDUCTING EMERGENCY ESCAPE SYSTEM TRAINING FOR COMPANY OFFICERS	Boght	January 7, 2023 0800-1700	Kerr	Firefighter I or Equivalent
NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION COURSE NEW TO SCHEDULE	Onesquethaw	January 5, 10, 12, 17 19 1830-2130	DeGross	Firefighter I or Equivalent
NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-PLANNING AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE COURSE NEW TO SCHEDULE	Coeymans Hollow	January 26, February 1 & 2 1830-2130	DeGross	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Live Fire Training NEW TO SCHEDULE	Coeymans	February 13 1830-2230	DeGross	None

NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT- COMPANY TRAINING AND COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION NEW TO SCHEDULE	Coeymans	February 16, 28, March 2, 7 1830-2130	DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
NYS OFFICER DEVELOPMENT- Firefighter Health & Safety NEW TO SCHEDULE	Rensselaerville	April 17, 18, 25, 27 1830-2130	DeGroff	Firefighter I or Equivalent
Unless changed by instructor or noted above: All evening classes will be held from 19:00-22:00 hours. All Saturday and Sunday classes will be held from 09:00-12:00 hours and 13:00-16:00 hours			 Fire Coordinator Gerald Paris 	