The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Department of Fire Services

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STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Dear Practitioner,

There is a cancer epidemic hiding within the fire service and YOU CAN HELP!!

Firefighters in the United States are 9% more likely to be diagnosed with cancer and 14% more likely to die of cancer compared with age-matched cohorts.[1]

Skin cancer is one of the cancers that is lurking within firehouses across the state, the US and the world. Melanoma has been diagnosed in Nordic and Australian firefighters at an increased rate and at earlier ages.[2,3] A survey of Florida firefighters corroborated this international finding.[4] The mission is to raise awareness about skin cancer by teaching the signs and symptoms of skin cancer and performing skin exams. This initiative has found several firefighters with melanoma.

Screening Massachusetts firefighters has provided local dermatologists the opportunity to give back to our communities by caring for those who protect and rescue the general public in times of extreme distress. These screenings are truly what the SPOTme campaign originally intended as these patients who have been found to have skin cancers over the past three+ years, are at high risk, did not have dermatologists, and many wanted to be screened. These screenings have occurred while the firefighters are at the fire stations so it is extremely easy and a "no brainer" for the firefighters to participate in this program.

Department of Fire Services State Fire Marshal's Office and the Massachusetts Fire Academy provide administrative support and the lighting in the facilities thereby allowing SPOTme volunteers to focus solely on the firefighter skin screenings.

If you are interested in this volunteer opportunity to help your local firefighters, please contact Abby Baker at Abby.Baker@mass.gov to schedule a date in your community. Thank you in advance for your willingness to serve others.

Thank you for your interest in this life-saving program.

Sincerely,

Peter Ostroskey
State Fire Marshal

Citations:

1.Daniels et al. Mortality and cancer incidence in a pooled cohort of US firefighters from San Francisco, Chicago and Philadelphia (1950-2009). Occup Environ Med. 2014 Jun, 71(6):388-97.

2.Pukkala et al. Cancer incidence among firefighters: 45 years of follow up in 5 Nordic countries. Occup Environ Med. 2014. Jun, 71(6):389-404.

3.Glass et al. Mortality and cancer incidence in a cohort of male paid Australian firefighters. Occup environ Med. 2016 Nov; 73(11): 761-771

4.Moore et al. Firefighter Skin Cancer and Sun Protection Practices: Evidence From the Florida Firefighter Cancer Initiative. JAMA Dermatol. 2018 Feb 1;154(2):219-221.