

# On the “Wright” Path

Studies over the past few years have indicated that cancer is the leading cause of death in firefighters. Being a firefighter provides you with a 9% increase for cancer diagnosis and a 14% increase to succumbing to cancer related death then the general public. These are scary statistics especially for a volunteer department.

**In 2010** our department had started to implement cancer prevention procedures and policies. These efforts started small with the introduction of a gear washer / extractor and have grown into a full list of standard operating guidelines. The cancer prevention initiative will continually evolve as manufacturers, suppliers, and agencies develop new methods and best practice guidelines to reduce the exposure risk to cancer causing byproducts. The cancer-causing products are produced during combustion of materials at a fire. These products of combustion become embedded in firefighter protective clothing, tools, breathing apparatus, and even on our skin. Removal (decontamination) is critical and must be done in various steps to prevent the spread and secondary exposure to firefighters. This secondary exposure can happen for an extended period of time well after the call is completed as products of combustion continue to dislodge and off gas from equipment. Here are a few of examples of how we handle denomination (decon) of clothing, tools, and firefighters following a emergency involving fire.

# On the Call



The gross decon pack is used to initially clean a fully clothed firefighter at the scene of a fire. The system utilizes a dry brush for heavy particle removal and a cleaning agent application, brushing and rinsing.

Gross Decon Pack



Self decontamination supplies are provided on all apparatus and are used for the initial cleaning of skin and other equipment while on a response call. Cleaning of exposed skin during a fire is critical in preventing cancer causing products from entering the body

Cleansing wipes and decon supplies



# At the Station



All turnout gear is washed, extracted, and dried in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations for cleaning and cancer prevention. This system has been in operation since 2010 and serves the department well. Our Mutual Aid Fire Departments also have access to the equipment and have utilized it to wash protective clothing.

## Washer/Extractor & Cabinet Dryer with automated detergent system



SCBA units are washed, sanitized, and dried after each use. Face masks are sanitized and sealed in protective bags, labeled and returned for use.

## SCBA cleaned, sealed, and ready for service



**Utilizing the *Wright* tools for the *Wright* job**