



Lethbridge

Professional Fire Fighters IAFF Local 237

AFFILIATED WITH
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS, AFL-CIO
ALBERTA FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

120/2016

Dear WCB Review Panel:

I am providing a written submission to the WCB review in regards to Fire Fighters in Alberta and specifically Fire Fighters within our organization, the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 237 Lethbridge (IAFF Local 237)

I would like to touch on a presumptive Myocardial infraction case one of our members had to go through. My understanding of the presumptive legislation for fire fighters was to avoid the lengthy appeal. One of our members went through years of appeal at a great expense to himself and tax payers to prove a presumptive claim that should have been automatically presumed.

The main hold up in this claim was defining if this member responded to an incident. I can share more details and specifics on this case if needed. Below is the language from the WCB act that should of made this case a presumptive case with no reason to go through the lengthy appeal process

“If a worker who is a full-time firefighter or part-time firefighter suffers a myocardial infarction within 24 hours after attendance at an emergency response, the myocardial infarction shall be presumed to have arisen out of and occurred during the course of employment as a full-time firefighter or part-time firefighter unless the contrary is proven.”

Some general comments for you to consider about the WCB review are:

- Fire fighters face specific health challenges because of the nature of our work
- Alone among the professions, we can only mitigate, rather than completely avoid, exposure to harmful elements such as benzene or concentrated hydrocarbons
- These are relatively small changes that wouldn't have any effect on WCB premiums, but they'd make a meaningful difference in many of our members' lives
- Studies have demonstrated that fire fighters are at a higher risk for certain cancers, and the *Firefighters' Primary Cancer Site Regulation* needs to be updated to reflect this reality

#6 – 3160 12TH Avenue North Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 5V1 Phone (403) 332-0237



Lethbridge

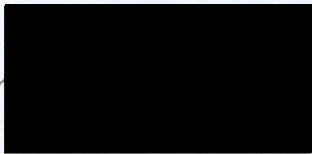
Professional Fire Fighters IAFF Local 237

AFFILIATED WITH
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS, AFL-CIO
ALBERTA FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Just as Ontario has done, the latency period for testicular cancer in Alberta needs to be reduced from 20 years of minimum exposure to 10 years
- The regulation also needs to be modernized to include female-specific cancers for the ever-growing number of women fire fighters. By doing so, Alberta would be a national leader
- The current two-year review period for presumptive cancers simply doesn't provide enough time for the field of study to evolve and provide conclusive recommendations. To ensure we have the best information possible to serve our members, this period needs to be extended to five years
- That the definition of "emergency response" should be clarified to begin at the start of an alarm, rather than attendance at the scene of an emergency. This is an important distinction for many claim types, including those by fire fighters who experience a myocardial infarction
- The WCB needs to improve its process for assessing PTSD claims. The advice and recommendations of treating medical professionals need to be respected, not repeatedly questioned. Once a diagnosis has been made, no further referrals should be required. As opposed to forcing fire fighters to relive their trauma, the process should provide them with the supports they need to begin moving beyond it
- A clearer definition of cause for presumptive cancer or guidelines around specific physicians accredited to assess cause needs to be developed

Thanks for your consideration and review



Drew Ginther
Treasurer
IAFF Local 237
Lethbridge Fire fighters