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Firefighters to receive enhanced WCB coverage for cancer

Edmonton... Firefighters will now automatically be eligible for Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) coverage if they contract esophageal or testicular cancer. These two cancers are being added to the list of cancers with automatic WCB coverage for qualifying firefighters, bringing the list to ten.

"This is something we owe to the people who risk their lives to keep us safe," said Thomas Lukaszuk, Minister of Employment and Immigration. "WCB already gives tremendous cancer coverage to firefighters but this will streamline things. By adding these two cancers to the list, we can provide compensation to firefighters and their families immediately instead of waiting for the results of complex investigations."

WCB Alberta provides compensation to all workers it covers if they are injured or contract an illness as a result of work. Although there are many factors that can contribute to the risk of contracting cancer, firefighters are at greater risk than the general public of being exposed to a variety of toxic or cancer-causing agents when they approach burning buildings. Ten cancers are now considered to be "presumptive" or presumed to be work related without requiring proof.

The Alberta Fire Fighters Association (AFFA) supported the change, noting that cancer rates among firefighters are between three and five times the rates among the general population and they contract these diseases much earlier in life. "This coverage gives firefighters peace of mind that their families will be looked after should they succumb to this occupational disease," said AFFA Secretary Brad Hoekstra.

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More information on WCB presumptive coverage of cancers for firefighters can be found online at: http://www.wcb.ab.ca/pdfs/workers/WFS_Firefighters_with_cancer.pdf

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