

NFCC - Working Group Paper circulation: A summary of the literature provided to CAST regarding the potential long-term health effects of smoke contamination on firefighter PPE

22 March 2018

Dear CFO Colleagues

Following on from my previous letter dated 11 January 2017. I am writing to provide you with the paper summarising the NFCC commissioned work for the review of literature on the potential long-term health effects associated with smoke contamination on firefighter PPE and the relative risk of occurrence of cancer. In order to give focus to the report there are six key project areas:

1. What is the international problem we are here to understand?
2. Does the UK have an equivalent problem?
3. To what relative extent does the UK have a problem?
4. How far do current procedures address the issue?
5. Do alternative procedures/ideas/technologies exist?
6. Does existing research indicate any gaps in UK approach?

I would like to place on record my thanks to the Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) for undertaking the initial review, their project support and their contribution to the stakeholder board, which also includes all key representative bodies.

Based on CAST's initial review of the information and the complex nature of risk assignment, it is not possible to prove or disprove a link specifically between contamination on firefighter PPE and a potential increase in relative risk of occurrence of cancer, without more work being conducted in this priority area.

The paper contains several recommendations, which as Chair and with the support of the project team we are pursuing further to establish a more informed position for the sector, and as such, I have the pleasure of updating you on the proposed next steps:

- To provide a further summary on recent publications from the following organisations:
 - Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM)
 - Institute for Safety (IFV, Netherlands)
 - University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)
- Investigate the need for a follow up study on off gassing of PPE to supplement the initial report

- To establish an advisory board with experts from academia, UK and international governments, reporting to the stakeholder group
- To establish stronger ties with experts and maximise opportunities for sharing and collaborating on research within this area
- To continue to look at possible contamination routes, building on preliminary observations conducted with colleagues in Hertfordshire at a live fire event
- Summarisation of findings and incorporation into guidance documents
- Explore the potential for a longitudinal study to be considered

Please accept my apologies for the delay in the release of this paper, but with the broad scope, CAST sought to ensure that the information provided was concise and that the salient points were highlighted to inform the next steps.

There is also a joint letter/statement issued highlighting the preventative measures recently issued by the NFCC health and safety leads, the representative bodies and Scott Pearce from Kent Fire and Rescue Service ensuring we continue to reduce any potential risks whilst further work is undertaken. This includes reference to best practice on reducing contamination, hydration and heat management.

I look forward to coordinating the next steps and your various offers of assistance in this important area of work.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Davies', written in a cursive style.

CFO Chris Davies QFSM
CFOA Health and Safety lead