



22 March 2018

Dear Colleagues

The Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) in collaboration with the Personal Protective Equipment Contamination Working Group (PPEC WG) led by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), undertook an initial review of literature regarding the potential long-term health effects associated with contamination on firefighter Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This was to determine whether there was a connection specifically, between contamination on firefighter PPE and an increase in the relative risk of occurrence of cancer (CAST 89/17, February 2018).

Due to the complex chemical environment of fires, the fact that the data on current cancer rates does not reflect current practices, the conflicting nature of the literature and the difficulty in assigning cancer risk to specific activities with limited direct evidence, it is not possible to either prove or disprove a link specifically between contamination on firefighter PPE and a potential increase in the relative risk of occurrence of cancer.

CAST have recommended that further work is undertaken in this area utilising subject matter experts and reviewing new and emerging literature to establish a more informed position for the sector. Once this further work is complete, a better picture of the situation will be available which will lead to recommendations as to how the risk could be reduced by establishing procedures that all UK FRS's may wish to follow.

Whilst this further work is undertaken it is important to continue to follow the preventative measures recently issued by the NFCC health and safety leads, the representative bodies and Scott Pearce from Kent Fire and Rescue "Thinks Contaminates" Lead for minimising contact with contamination and containing/reducing the spread of contamination further. The best practice for minimising contact with contamination includes wearing appropriate PPE in accordance with the current practices and following the prescribed cleaning, decontamination and storage methods provided for the PPE before, during and after an incident.

In addition to the PPE it is important to re-iterate best practice for the users of the PPE including personal hygiene, hydration and heat management, each of which have the potential to influence the effects of contamination to the firefighter.

Remember: Clean is the new tough.

Yours sincerely



CFO Chris Davies QFSM
CFOA Health and Safety lead



Mark Palmer
RFU Vice President



Scott Pearce
Kent Fire & Rescue Service



Kent Fire &
Rescue Service



Sean Starbuck
National Officer



Clive Robinson
FOA National President

