



UPFFA

Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut

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The **HOT** Sheet

News and information from Connecticut's
Professional Fire Fighters

HB 5629 AAC WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR FIREFIGHTERS, POLICE OFFICERS AND EMERGENCY RESCUE WORKERS

HB 5629 extends much needed protection to Fire Fighters and Police Officers in three areas of critical threats to their health and well-being; *Contagious Diseases, Cardiac Emergencies and Cancer.*

SECTION 1 of this bill addresses the need to help Fire Fighters and Police Officers cope with the horrific aftermath of an exposure to and contraction of a Communicable Disease.

Present privacy laws make it extremely difficult if not impossible for a fire fighter or police officer to adequately record an incident of exposure. The medical condition of ALL patients treated by fire fighters and police is PROTECTED INFORMATION, making it difficult to document necessary Worker's Compensation information thus compromising future claims.

The emotional trauma to worker's and their families of being exposed to a highly contagious disease has had devastating effects on some families. Most claims are routinely denied, forcing workers to fight to protect themselves and their families. Requiring them to bear the burden of litigation without the benefit of presumption on their side only adds to the family trauma and is unjust. **REBUTTABLE** presumption is the most equitable solution.

This bill seeks to establish a **REBUTTABLE** presumption that firefighters, police officers, emergency rescue, and other public safety personnel who contract hepatitis, meningococcal meningitis, or tuberculosis did so in the course of their employment provided certain criteria are met. Should municipalities feel a claim is not justified, they have the right to challenge that claim with evidence that the exposure occurred out of work.

SECTION 2 of this bill attempts to correct the inequities created by the 1996 changes in Workers' Compensation.

The changes created two classifications of public safety officers; uniformed municipal fire fighters and police officers and nearly ALL OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY OFFI-

CERS in the State of Connecticut. If a *Volunteer Fire Fighter, State Police Officer, Corrections Officer, Capitol Police Officer, Division of Criminal Justice Detective, DOT Aeronautic Operator, Motor Vehicle Inspector, University Security Officer and State employee performing hazardous duties* were to suffer a heart attack on duty, they are presumed to have contracted such heart ailment in the course of their employment. **THIS IS NOT THE CASE** for municipal fire fighters and police officers. If a fire fighter or police officer suffers a heart attack while on duty, it is his/her responsibility to prove that this condition occurred as a result of their employment. This places the municipal fire fighter and police officer in a fundamentally more difficult position than any other public safety officer in Connecticut.

This bill **IS NOT A RETURN TO PRE-1996 COVERAGE** but limits municipal fire fighters and police officers to the same coverage as most if not all other hazardous duty officers, that is, ON DUTY incidents.

SECTION 3 of this bill recognizes the direct correlation between chemical exposures and increased incidents of certain cancers in fire fighters and police officers incurred in the performance of their duties.

According to the results of a September 2006 study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, fire fighters have an increased risk of developing specific types of cancer due to exposure to many hazardous substances which may be inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin.

Four types of cancers were found to be prevalent in fire fighters when compared to workers in other occupations; fire fighters are twice as likely to develop testicular cancer, multiple myeloma or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and 28% more likely to develop prostate cancer than the general public.

This bill provides a **REBUTTABLE** presumption for fire fighters and police officers with certain cancers.