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2026: Volume 3, Issue 2

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Honoring Firefighter Appreciation Month

This September, MI-CARES recognizes firefighters for their service and dedication to our communities. In honor of Firefighter Appreciation Month, we are sharing research on firefighter cancer risk, prevention resources, and stories of people making a difference in Michigan's firefighting community.

MI-CARES is working to include participants from communities and occupations that may experience higher environmental or occupational exposures, including firefighters and first responders. Increasing participation from these groups helps researchers better understand cancer risk and environmental health concerns across Michigan. By joining MI-CARES, participants can contribute valuable information that may guide future prevention and outreach efforts.

Introducing Joe Warne



We are thrilled to spotlight Joe Warne and his tireless work to bring cancer awareness and support to the firefighting community.

Joe Warne is a firefighter who lives in Macomb Township, Michigan. In 2019, he launched the “Walk for the Red” initiative through his non-profit, [Neighbors United](#). The initial inspiring event involved a 140-mile walk across the state of Michigan to raise awareness about the leading cause of death for firefighters: **cancer**. Since then, firefighters and community members have joined Joe each year, coming together to raise funds for firefighters battling cancer and their families.

Joe’s mission is to alleviate the financial burden faced by these families, allowing them to create lasting memories and receive the support they need. Through his tireless dedication, Joe is making a significant impact on the lives of those who put everything on the line for their communities.

This year’s **Walk for the Red event will take place September 10th**. Visit the [Walk for the Red website](#) to learn more about the event and how you can support the cause.

walkforthered.org

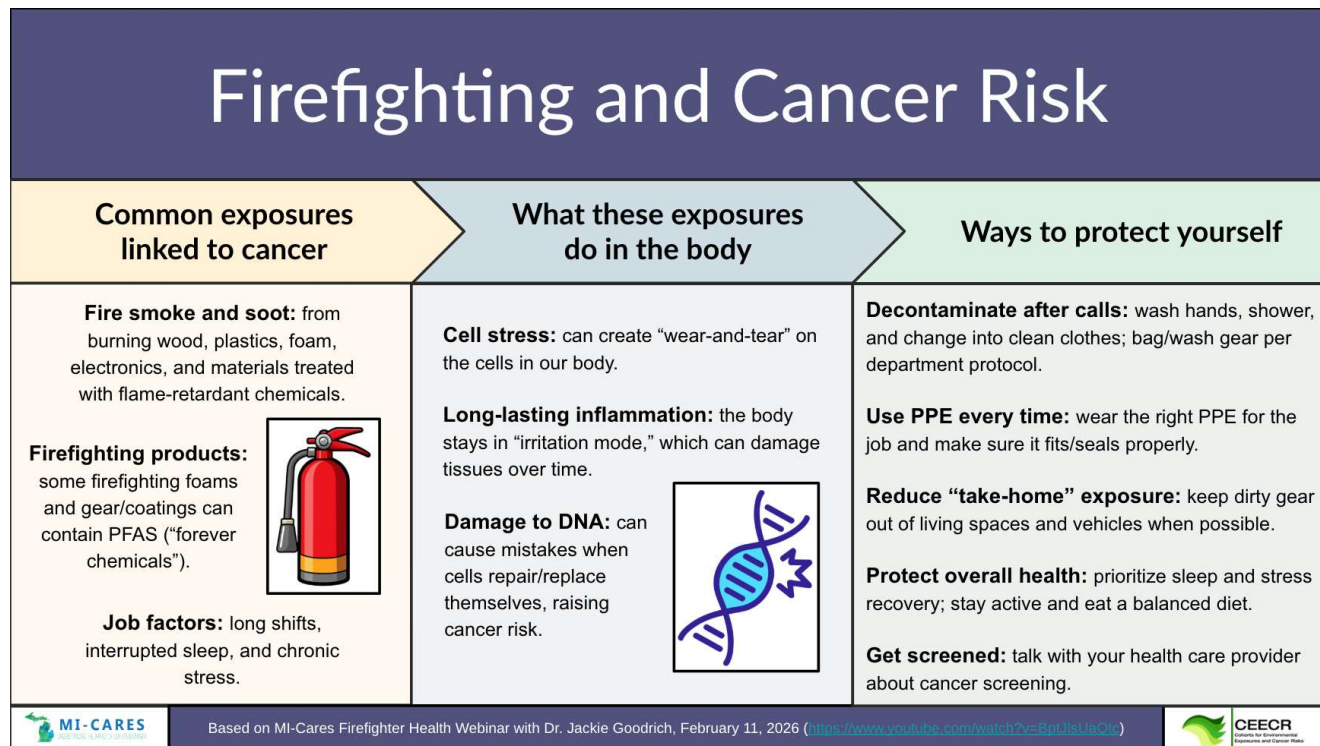
Why Are Firefighters at Greater Risk?

Firefighters face more than flames when they respond to emergencies. Smoke, contaminated gear, PFAS-containing materials, flame retardants, heat, stress, and disrupted sleep can all contribute to health risks over time. In a recent [MI-CARES webinar](#), Dr. Jackie Goodrich shared what researchers are learning about firefighter exposures and **why firefighting has been classified as cancer-causing** (carcinogenic) to humans.

The science is complex, but the takeaway is clear: **understanding these exposures is an important step toward prevention**. To learn more about the research behind these risks and the steps that may help reduce exposure, watch the full MI-CARES webinar on our [YouTube channel](#) and check out the visual abstract in this newsletter for a quick overview of the key takeaways.

[Click to Watch!](#)

Understanding Risk



Summer Heat, Gear,

and Firefighter Health

Did you know summer conditions can add another layer of risk for firefighters? High temperatures, poor air quality, heavy PPE, and physically demanding emergency response can increase strain on the body. While protective gear helps reduce exposure to smoke and harmful chemicals, it can also make it harder to stay cool during extreme heat or long calls.

Check Your Knowledge

Firefighters may be exposed to cancer-related hazards through which of the following?

- A. Smoke and combustion byproducts
- B. Contaminated gear and equipment
- C. PFAS-containing materials
- D. Heat, stress, and disrupted sleep
- E. All of the above

Answer: All of the above. Firefighters face multiple exposures on the job which is why prevention, education, and continued research are so important.

MI-CARES studies how environmental and occupational exposures may affect long-term health, including cancer risk. To learn more, explore the firefighter health resources in this newsletter, watch the MI-CARES webinar, and consider sharing MI-CARES with firefighters or first responders in your community. Another timely issue as the summer heats up is air quality. Check out our infographic with tips on how to protect yourself.

Thinking of Winter While Melting?

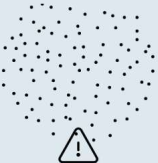
Did you know air quality alerts aren't just a summer issue? While we often think about poor air quality during hot, hazy summer days, Michigan can also experience air quality concerns in the winter. According to a recent MLive article, sudden snowmelt, moisture, and calm weather conditions can trap pollutants close to the ground,

contributing to air quality alerts when particles from traffic, wood burning, and other sources build up.

As we move through summer, it's a good reminder that air quality can be affected by changing weather in every season. Read the full MLive article to learn how winter thaws can impact the air we breathe. For now, while we enjoy the warm weather, try to remember your sunscreen, hat, and sunglasses.

[Click to Read More!](#)

Understanding Risk

Poor air quality - what can you do?		
Air quality index (AQI)	Air pollution	Recommendations
 AQI measures outdoor air pollution. If air quality is unhealthy, protect your health. Weather and pollution from traffic, industry, and fires.  <i>Wildfire smoke in Detroit from June 2023. By WXYZ-TV Detroit.</i>	 Air pollution comes from particles and toxic gases that can harm people and the planet. When air quality is poor, pollution can affect your eyes, lungs, and heart. 	Consider these steps to lower your exposures:  ✓ Do not exercise outside ✓ Keep windows closed ✓ Wear a mask outdoors  ✓ Stay indoors if possible ✓ Use an air purifier, air conditioner, or fan inside Make a DIY air filter for home or work, visit: https://cleanaircrew.org/box-fan-filters/

 Based on Stateside from Michigan Radio: NPR with Dr. Sara Adar, June 7, 2023  

[Get the DIY Guide](#)

What Can MI-CARES Bring to the First Responder Community and Beyond?

MI-CARES can help bring attention, research, and resources to communities facing environmental and occupational health concerns. For firefighters, this means helping researchers better understand exposures related to smoke, chemicals, gear, heat, and other workplace risks. Over time, what we learn through MI-CARES can support education, prevention strategies, and stronger conversations around protecting firefighter health.

Stay Connected

Remain up to date on our events, ask a study related question, or suggest a topic for the next issue. We'd love to hear from you!



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