

From: **"Mochrie, Paul"**
To: **"Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"**
Date: 2024-04-11 9:27:32 AM
Subject: Upcoming news release: Vancouver leads industry in protecting firefighters with new PFAS-free gear (April 12, 2024)

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to inform you that the City jointly with VFRS will be issuing the below news release on April 12 regarding Vancouver Fire Rescue Services becoming the first fire department in North America to transition to turnout gear free from PFAS, which will reduce the risk of cancer firefighters face.

Please keep this news release embargoed until it goes live from the City media email account during the media event on Friday, April 12 at 3 pm.

Maria will reply to this email with the relevant Vancouver.ca link and social media links, once these are live.

Best,

Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵw̱əy̱əm (Musqueam), S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

City of Vancouver
Vancouver Fire Rescue Services
News release
April 12, 2024

Vancouver leads industry in protecting firefighters with new PFAS-free gear

City firefighters will face reduced risk of cancer as Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) becomes the first fire department in North America to transition to turnout gear free from Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

On April 9, 2024, Vancouver City Council approved a one-time VFRS 2024 budget increase of \$2.8 million to procure PFAS-free bunker gear to ensure all personnel are covered for the remainder of 2024.

"The City is proud to be the North American leader in creating a safer workplace for Vancouver's firefighters," said Ken Sim, Mayor of Vancouver. "In approving the transition to PFAS-free gear, we provide greater protection to those who put their lives on the line daily for Vancouverites. It is the least we can do for our hardworking team members."

Commonly known as “forever chemicals”, PFAS are found in the water-repellent inner liner of structural firefighting turnout gear. Firefighters are exposed through daily skin contact with this moisture barrier, which is intensified during periods of extreme heat and high physical exertion.

Just under a quarter of all occupational claims within VFRS are linked to cancer, or cancer-related illnesses, with 34 members having died from work-related cancers since 2017.

“Firefighter occupational cancer is currently the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths in the Canadian fire service. We need to change that,” said Karen Fry, Fire Chief and General Manager of Vancouver Fire Rescue Services. “We are proud to be leading the way as the first fire service in North America to provide PFAS-free gear and will continue to seek new innovations to support the health and safety of our crews.”

Using existing budgets, a partial order of 220 units of new bunker gear has already been placed to supply around a quarter of the VFRS workforce, with delivery expected by the end of the year.

Quick facts:

- Occupational cancer is the leading cause of death among firefighters, with the World Health Organization classifying their exposure as a top-level carcinogen.
- In 2023, 72 per cent of firefighter deaths in the International Association of Fire Fighters were due to occupational cancer, and in Canada, this figure was nearly 94 per cent.
- 20 per cent of all VFRS are for presumptive cancers, with 34 members having died from work-related cancer in the last seven years.

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Media contact:

City of Vancouver

Civic Engagement and Communications

media@vancouver.ca

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services

Captain Matthew Trudeau, Public Information Officer

matthew.trudeau@vancouver.ca

604-603-2466