

Reducing firefighter cancer risk: equipment saves lives

When the alarm sounds in the firehouse with a report of a fire, our firefighters must be able to put on all their turnout gear (they call it PPE or personal protective equipment) in under one minute. The gear is worn over their uniform pants and shirt and is designed for thermal protection, durability, visibility in the dark, and as a barrier to airborne toxins. Each firefighter's PPE (boots, pants, coat, hood, gloves, helmet, air tank, mask) costs approximately \$7,500 and must be replaced at least every ten years. A firefighter's PPE is the only thing between them and dangers associated with their firefighting and rescue efforts, so it is very important that it is kept in tip-top shape. Cleaning after every fire to remove toxic ash and other substances that can cause cancer is required by fire department policy. Keeping all dirty turnout gear out of firehouse living quarters and training areas is also a mandate. Regular PPE checks and repairs are part of the maintenance program too. Firefighters rely on their gear to protect their skin and lungs so it's an investment the Township Trustees take very seriously, and with gratitude for their willingness to go in harm's way to protect lives.