

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## Senator Roger Holland

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April 28, 2021

## Senate Bill 131

### *Workers' Compensation Disability for Firefighters*

#### Sponsor Statement

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous job. It is important that workers compensation insurance provides coverage for the inherent risks in that job, but right now there is a hole in that coverage: breast cancer.

This bill would add breast cancer to the list of presumed disability coverages for firefighters, so long as the firefighter could establish medically that the breast cancer was caused by work as a firefighter.

Instances of cancer in firefighters is shown to be higher than the general population. Studies that have evaluated cancer risk among women firefighters suggest women firefighters, like their male coworkers, may be at an elevated risk for overall cancer incidence (Daniels et al., 2014). These studies also suggest women firefighters may be at an elevated incidence risk for breast cancer (Daniels et al., 2014). This bill protects not only women, because exposure to carcinogenic chemicals, which is sometimes necessary in the course of a firefighter's job, does not discriminate based on sex or gender. Exposure to these chemicals may be mitigated, but not eliminated, through protective equipment. Firefighters are at a higher risk of cancer, and this risk should be covered.

Thank you for your consideration of the addition of breast cancer to the list of presumed disability coverages for firefighters.