



Chugiak Volunteer Fire and Rescue

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April 28, 2021

The Honorable Senator Roger Holland
State Senate
State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK. 99801

Senator Holland,

Thank you immensely for your willingness to assist the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association in our endeavor to have Title 23 of Alaska Statute amended to include additional conditions to the list of presumptive diseases. We are happy that AS provides presumptive coverage for diseases that are more prevalent in firefighters. However, we also assert there is work to be done. For example, wider coverage for behavioral health, an expansion of cancer coverages and easier access to ALL responders is something we will be educating about and pursuing in the future.

Our immediate concern is for cancer coverage in support of the large group of female firefighters in the Last Frontier. Numerous studies have been conducted to reveal that individuals involved in fire suppression, whether it be as a volunteer or career firefighter, are at higher risk of cancer. The list of presumptive diseases in the Alaska Statute are either male specific or gender neutral. It is imperative that all responders are afforded the same support. Female responders are 33% of the demographic which makes up Chugiak Volunteer Fire and Rescue. These numbers are similar across the state with some communities relying more so on female responders.

To further illustrate the disparity, one study concluded 14% of male firefighters diagnosed with cancer experience prostate cancer while 28% of female firefighters with cancer have breast cancer. Title 23 currently extends compensability for disability related to firefighter prostate cancer, but does not extend to females with breast cancer. The AFCA appreciates the opportunity to bring this to light and hopes that a resolution can be made quickly with little impact other than the obvious positive.

We are grateful to you and to Senator Hughes for working quickly and hope that this revision can be fast tracked to ensure the responders of Alaska are supported.

Tim Benningfield
Tim Benningfield, Chief