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Department Receives SHIP Grant Reducing the risk of job-related cancers

Kent, Wash. - January 27, 2015- On October 28, 2014, the Kent Fire Department RFA and the Washington State Council of Firefighters received a Safety and Health Investment Project (SHIP) grant.

Funding and support for this project has been provided by the State of Washington, Department of Labor and Industries, Safety and Health Investments.

The \$102,313.00 grant is entitled "Best Practices for Reducing Firefighter Risk of Exposure to Carcinogens" and as the title suggests will focus on:

- Creating a "best practices" manual outlining standards to reduce exposures.
- Developing a model policy which local jurisdictions can adopt.
- Promoting cancer awareness within the fire service through a publicity campaign.

The profession of firefighting is a dangerous one that includes not only the hazards that most people would consider such as building collapse and burns, but also long-term dangers such as job-related cancers. Oncologists and other experts throughout the world agree that the chemicals and other toxins inhaled, absorbed, and ingested by firefighters over the course of a career are the causes of some cancers. In fact, firefighters are more likely to develop testicular, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, or prostate cancer than virtually any other profession.

This SHIP grant is a major step towards education and awareness for firefighters and their departments. Reduced incidents of cancer means longer life expectancy, better quality of life, and reduced medical costs. All SHIP grants are founded for creating tools and materials for specific training needs, ergonomics, best practices, and other topics to reduce workplace illnesses, injuries, and fatalities.

The author of the grant, Captain Beth Gallup of the Kent Fire Department RFA has firsthand knowledge of how deadly cancer can be on the job. In 2008, one of her crew, Engineer Marty Hauer, died after a yearlong battle with cancer. Marty, a fitness expert and non-smoker, was the last person Beth would have thought could get cancer. In the next four years, two other Kent firefighters, Ernie Rideout and Bob Schmidt, both died from cancer. These deaths were her motivation. "I never want to have to go to another funeral and hear bagpipes". She added, "Bagpipes should be at celebrations, not funerals". The playing of bagpipes is a tradition at firefighter funeral services.

Beth has high hopes for the grant and hopes that by analyzing those parts of the job that increase exposure to carcinogens (cancer causing or promoting substances), procedures can be developed to reduce or eliminate them.

For more information on SHIP grants, go to <http://www.lni.wa.gov/safety/GrantsPartnerships/SHIP/Grants.asp>.

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