

Each day firefighters will encounter a danger that many have no idea still exists. Indeed, very few people understand the scope of the asbestos problem that still affects thousands of people on a daily basis. Asbestos containing materials are still within construction compounds in nearly 80% of structures built prior to 1980. When these structures are damaged, the asbestos within them becomes particularly hazardous. Among the more common ways for buildings to be damaged is by fire, putting firefighters at a much higher risk than that of other professions.

Firefighter's first danger is during the actual fire itself. Typically, protective equipment will be worn to prevent inhalation of hazardous toxins and asbestos exposure can usually be prevented through the use of this equipment. However, as emergency may sometimes necessitate the removal of this equipment, firefighters should be aware that this hazard exists.

Most exposures, however, take place after the initial stages of firefighting and during the overhaul. During this period, while the last flames and embers are suppressed, it is more likely that firefighters will engage with harmful and damaged asbestos-containing materials. It is also more likely that during this period, the cumbersome protective equipment worn during the initial stages of fire suppression will be removed.

Even within firehouses, the hazard of asbestos still exists. Each year, dozens of firehouses are closed because of high asbestos-presence during air quality testing. Asbestos was used to insulate the weather resistant piping and electrical infrastructure of firehouses and still exists in older structures. Those who encounter these materials often or repair them are likely those most at risk of a harmful exposure.

By spreading awareness of this hazard we can prevent harmful health complications caused by asbestos exposure, including the cancer mesothelioma, for which there is no known cure. For more information regarding asbestos, mesothelioma, or mesothelioma treatment, please visit Mesothelioma.com.