**FIREFIGHTER COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL EXAM TEMPLATE**

Dear Primary Care Provider:

Thank you for providing medical care to firefighters. You play a vital role to help prevent the disturbingly high incidences of cancer, heart disease and behavioral health conditions in firefighters. Firefighting places tremendous demands on the cardiovascular system that can lead to premature structural heart and coronary artery disease. Acute and chronic exposure to human suffering and sleep deprivation pose significant mental health risks to firefighters.

Firefighters are exposed to numerous cancer causing chemicals from the byproducts of combustion of common household items made of plastics and furniture covered with flame retardants as well as diesel exhaust fumes in the firehouse. These carcinogenic chemicals are absorbed, inhaled, and ingested into the firefighters’ skin, airways, and gastrointestinal system. Well researched government and university studies demonstrate that firefighters have significant risks for developing respiratory, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, skin and blood cancers.

Firefighters should be considered “high-risk” patients because of these unique exposures and deserve comprehensive physicals and screening tests for prevention and early detection of heart disease, cancer and behavioral health issues annually.

**Recommended Firefighter Physical Exam and Screening Tests**

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| * Blood pressure, pulse | * Comprehensive metabolic panel |
| * Respiratory rate and temp. | * Liver function tests |
| * Oxygen saturation | * Hepatitis profile |
| * Weight and body-fat index | * Complete blood count |
| * Thorough skin exam | * Thyroid panel |
| * Eye and hearing exams | * Hemoglobin A1c (for diabetes monitoring) |
| * Throat and thyroid exam | * Fasting lipids and blood glucose |
| * Heart and lung exam | * Urinalysis and urine biomarkers |
| * Prostate and rectal exam | * EKG |
| * Abdominal and testicular exam | * PSA (**begin at age 40** for prostate cancer screening) |
| * Fecal occult blood testing | * Mammograms for females **(begin age 35)** |
| * Pelvic and Pap for females | * Low-dose chest CT scanning **(begin age 50)** |
| * Vascular exam | * Colonoscopy (**begin age 40 and every 5 years**) |
| * Neurological exam | * Pulmonary function test every 3 years |
| * Musculoskeletal exam | * Exercise stress echocardiogram test (**begin age 40** and every three to five years) |
| * **Behavioral health screenings:** anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicidal ideation, sleep disorders, smoking, and self-medicating behaviors with alcohol and drugs | |

I have gained a unique perspective and understanding of the tremendous dangers and health risks associated with firefighting from my 20 years of combined experience as a Boston firefighter and the department physician for the BFD. Now, as a practicing PCP who treats many firefighters, I am convinced that these screening protocols work. They are very effective tools for early detection and prevention of these serious occupational related illnesses.

These high rates of cancer, heart disease and behavioral health conditions in firefighters are no longer acceptable. Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedules to review these medical surveillance evaluations for firefighters. I do hope you seriously consider using these screening protocols for all your firefighter patients.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Hamrock, MD

(Dr. Hamrock is working closely with the Last Call Foundation and the Firefighter Cancer Support Network to prevent occupational injuries and illnesses in firefighters. He practices primary care and addiction medicine at Steward St. Elizabeth’s Medical Center in Boston, MA.)