

Press Release



Fire fighters launch cancer battle action call

Brussels, March 3, 2015 — After years of saving lives fire fighters are now battling to save their own.

According to the European Fire Fighters Unions Alliance (EFFUA), constant exposure to deadly toxic smoke in the line of duty is resulting in unacceptably high rates of cancer among fire fighters.

“We chose this profession to save lives, but as a result of toxic chemicals we end up fighting for our own. I’m tired of going to the funerals of colleagues who have died too young as a result of cancer,” EFFUA President Mikael Svanberg told a European Parliament meeting of MEPs Against Cancer (MAC) today.

The discussion – focused specifically on the issue of cancer and fire fighters – was co-organised by Fire Safe Europe (FSEU) and the Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL).

“The cancer rate amongst fire fighters is shocking and I don’t see why this issue has not been addressed yet. It is time to take action both on EU level and Member States” said meeting chairman and Czech Republic MEP Pavel Poc.

Anders Cederberg, a cancer survivor told MEPs: “I was diagnosed with occupational cancer in 2011 after 29 years as a fire fighter. The prognosis is good, but no fire fighter should endure what my family and I had to endure.”

EFFUA is now calling on the European Union to introduce tough new smoke toxicity regulations for construction materials, funding for further studies into the issue of fire fighters and work-related cancer and extra resources to improve health training for fire fighters.

Alex Forrest, Canadian Trustee, International Association of Fire Fighters, said that a recent study by Monash University in Melbourne had found overall cancer rates were elevated among Australian fire fighters compared to the general public.

“This is a concern that impacts fire fighters all over the world. It is not one fire that is killing us, it is the hundreds we are exposed to during our career,” he said. “The issue of occupational exposure to these deadly chemicals needs to be addressed now.”

About Fire Safe Europe:

Fire Safe Europe (FSEU) is a broad and unique cross-sectorial alliance of fire experts, fire fighters, European associations, and international companies, including construction manufacturers and material suppliers of insulation, cable, concrete, ceiling, and fire protection equipment. FSEU’s mission is to improve fire safety in buildings for European citizens through the FireSafetyFirst campaign, large-scale fire tests and sharing of expertise. Fire Safe Europe’s call to action on fire safety in buildings can be found on: www.firesafeeurope.eu.

About the European Fire Fighters Unions Alliance (EFFUA):

The European Fire Fighters Unions Alliance (EFFUA) is an international alliance of independent trade unions representing fire fighters in 12 European countries. EFFUA works towards creating a safer and better working environment for fire fighters. EFFUA is an active partner of Fire Safe Europe as they work together in improving fire safety in building.

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