



The Training Brief

Quick Reference mini-training Topics
Modifiable Risk Factors

The purpose of this training topic is to ensure an understanding of the modifiable risk factors that can be taken by Firefighters.

Discussion

Modifiable risk factors are behaviors and exposures that can raise or lower a person's risk of cancer. They are modifiable because they can, in theory, be changed. If you use tobacco products STOP. Exercise, eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Eat less red meat, fried and fatty foods. Avoid calorie dense, nutrient poor foods, exercise portion control. Use sunscreen whenever out in the sun. Reduce alcohol consumption.

Shift workers face particular challenges related to sleep. When workers start shift work, it is not uncommon for them to have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep and they often find themselves tired even after 7-8 hours of sleep. If this trend continues for several weeks, it can be considered Shift Work Disorder. It is important for firefighters to get as much good sleep as they can when they can get it. Typical sleep hygiene habits, like going to sleep as close to the same time as possible each night, keeping your sleeping area quiet and dark, and ensuring exposure to natural light during the day are even more important for firefighters.

Make the necessary changes

To reduce modifiable risk factors, a wellness/Fitness program should be implemented. As part of the wellness program you should also focus on:

- Fitness
- Medical
- Sleep Hygiene
- Modifiable Risk Factors
- Behavioral/Mental Health

Medical Evaluations:

Early diagnosis is key to create the best chance for optimal outcomes and treatment strategies for cardiac and cancer related health issues.

A Physical Fitness Evaluation should address the following key points:

- Annual physical exams for early detection of potential illnesses.
- If members are utilizing their personal physicians for annual
- checkups, please refer to the updated recommendations for annual physicals for the high-risk employee.

Recommendations for Annual Physicals for the High-Risk Employee:

- <http://www.fstaresearch.org/resource/?FstarId=11591>
- <https://www.safetystanddown.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FCSN-Letter-to-Primary-Care-Provider.pdf>
- Annual Physicals save lives: Early detection is key to survival. Download the physical forms with the links provided and take them to your primary care Physician for an annual physical. In addition, see a dermatologist regularly.

Sleep Hygiene:

Sleep related issues like insomnia, restless leg syndrome, or sleep apnea plagues many members of the fire service. Sleep deprivation is a risk factor for cardiac disease, cancer, Immune systems malfunctions (obesity, diabetes and metabolic syndrome), and Alzheimer's disease.

Modifiable Risk Factors:

- The following examples are modifiable factors that can influence cancer risk:
- Tobacco Products Cessation.
- Exposure to sunlight (sunscreen use).
- Healthy weight management.
- Alcohol consumption (alcohol consumption leads to an increased cancer risk).