A couple of quick questions for the group:

1. Do you know any firefighters that have or have had skin cancer of any variety (probability of “yes” answer is roughly 100%)

2. Do you know at what frequency firefighters have skin cancer over the general population? (39%)

3. How many firefighters in this room have come home with a significant sunburn following training or a fire? (probably most)

Firefighters, like the general population can take basic steps to protect their skin from the sun. For training, there is no excuse to not wear sunscreen and protect your ears and head with a hat. Many dermatologists (like mine) recommend a SPF 15 on days you do not expect to be outside other than travel, and 30 or higher on days you intend to be outside.

Use sun screen that protects against both types of ultraviolet radiation, ultraviolet-B and ultraviolet-A (UVA). UVB rays account for only 5% of the UV rays reaching the surface of the earth. UVB rays cause sunburn and contribute to aging of skin, skin cancers, and hyperpigmentation. The majority (about 95%) of UV rays that reach earth are UVA rays. While these are less potent than UVB rays, they are also thought to promote skin cancers and skin aging.

Firefighters tend to be of the personality that do outside activities such as boating, fishing, hunting, and other sports, and protection there is even more important as it tends to be longer duration.

Before somebody brings it up, there was a problem a few years back with some sunscreen products containing a flammable propellant such as alcohol or other petroleum products. Before the sunscreen dried it could actually ignite if close enough to a source of flame. Check the ingredients on aerosol or spray products.


Resources: [http://www.firefightercancersupport.org/](http://www.firefightercancersupport.org/)

6/14 Dave Casey, FETI Director

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1 [http://www.wmur.com/special-reports/firefighters-at-higher-risk-for-some-cancers/20052002#l0fitf](http://www.wmur.com/special-reports/firefighters-at-higher-risk-for-some-cancers/20052002#l0fitf)