
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services

CANCER PRESUMPTION EXTENDED TO VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

VICTORIA – B.C.'s volunteer, part-time and paid on-call firefighters have been extended the benefit of a rebuttable presumption for certain types of cancer as occupational diseases associated with long-term employment as a firefighter, Labour and Citizens' Services Minister Michael de Jong announced today.

With an amendment to Bill 11, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2005, volunteer firefighters now have the same benefits recently awarded to their full-time counterparts with respect to workplace hazards that affect their long-term health.

"We agreed with what firefighters were telling us," de Jong said. "The potentially toxic conditions in which they work don't differentiate between volunteers and paid firefighters. It's important that legislation should not do so, either."

"We're extremely happy that government has included volunteer and part-time firefighters under this presumption," said Richard Lawrie, president of the Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia. "Volunteers work side by side with their full-time brethren every day. We're pleased that government has recognized the increased risk of cancer that all B.C. firefighters face."

The cancers recognized by WorkSafeBC as being linked to firefighting are: primary site brain cancer, primary site bladder cancer, primary site kidney cancer, primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, primary site ureter cancer, primary site colorectal cancer and primary leukemia.

The presumption will be retroactive to April 11, 2005.

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