



## To Whom It May Concern...

Which are all of us – those who work in the fire service as well as our families and extending to those who produce products and services that enhance the mission and capabilities for serving our communities.

One of the greatest concerns in the fire service today is the unprecedented occurrence of cancer in our ranks. A brief review of research conducted in cooperation with leading Fire Service organizations shows that on average firefighters are 1.5 times more likely to contract cancer than the general population; in some cases for particular types of cancer that risk more than doubles. Closer to home and on a more personal level we see members of our agencies – our own brothers and sisters struggle with cancer. At least monthly if not weekly another firefighter succumbs to the ravages of cancer.

This letter is a call to action for our agencies and the vendors who provide equipment for the Fire Service to stop the practice of marketing our agencies and products through the grit, soot, and drama associated with what many have come to accept as the model firefighter. In this day and age, with the sobering statistics of the rise of cancer among our firefighters, we can't afford portrayals of the Firefighters' Firefighter covered in soot from head to toe – with only the whites of their eyes free of the harmful carcinogens of ash, nor should we tolerate the picture of a firefighter working in an IDLH environment without their hood or mask. This also applies to us as fire agencies – we no longer tolerate entry without SCBA or other basic PPE, and yet we don't think twice when market our profession via a "glamour-shot" of our brothers and sisters in soot-caked turnouts.

Although we understand the nature of the portrayals, there is no need to glamorize the profession of firefighting and emergency services in this light. Deliberately melted face-shields and helmets are no longer the "badge of experience" to prove one's worth, and the same philosophy should now be sought when advertising our wares. The time has come to begin to promote the safety and health of our fire and emergency personnel through all venues available to us – including advertising.

Open Letter to Fire Service Vendors and Agencies

Please help us promote the longevity and sustainability of life and health that we all hope to achieve – not just during our active careers, but also through retirement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors of the Missouri Valley Division of the IAFC:

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