

Reducing Firefighters' Potential Chemical Exposures from Contaminated Skin or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Your Health Depends On It



Through direct contact to the skin or off-gassing from PPE, firefighters can be exposed to potentially hazardous chemicals both during and after firefighting activities. The New Jersey Department of Health is issuing this alert to New Jersey firefighters to raise awareness of this type of chemical exposure and present ways to minimize it.

Minimize breathing contaminants:



- ✓ Maintain and test SCBA routinely to ensure its proper function
- ✓ Use proper respiratory protection from initial attack, overhaul and investigation
- ✓ Remain upwind of the fire if not directly involved in the response
- ✓ Provide as much natural ventilation as feasible to burned structures before starting investigations and when responders are not wearing respiratory protection

Minimize skin absorption:



- ✓ Wear long hoods that are unlikely to come untucked during operations
- ✓ Keep protective ensembles on during overhaul
- ✓ Do gross field decon of PPE to remove as much soot and particulate matter as possible
- ✓ Wash hands immediately and shower as soon as possible after a fire response
- ✓ Use moistened wipes to remove as much soot as possible from head, neck, jaw, throat, under arms and hands immediately and while still on the scene
- ✓ Clean your PPE, gloves, hood and helmet immediately after a fire
- ✓ Have turnout gear cleaned routinely in accordance with NFPA 1851 (latest version)

Minimize inhalation of chemicals released from contaminated gear:



- ✓ Remove SCBA and hood last when doffing gear during decontamination
- ✓ Doff gear before entering the rehab area
- ✓ Consider bagging contaminated PPE and secure it in an apparatus compartment
- ✓ Do not take contaminated clothes or PPE home or store them in your vehicle
- ✓ Decontaminate the interior of fire apparatus after fires