

Frequently Asked Questions

Presumptive Coverage for Firefighters

December 2018

What are the changes?

On December 5, 2018, an *Act to Amend the Workers Compensation Act* was passed which contained amendments that provide presumptive coverage for cancer and heart injuries for firefighters and fire inspectors.

What does this mean?

These legislative and regulatory changes mean that if a firefighter or fire inspector develops primary site cancer or heart injury it will be presumed that it is work related unless there is significant evidence to the contrary.

Who is eligible for coverage under the presumption?

Eligible firefighters include fire investigators, and full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters who are members of a fire brigade and are assigned primarily to fire suppression duties.

In what circumstances will a claim be covered by the WCB?

Presumptive coverage is based on the following principles:

- The specified injuries or diseases are presumed to be work-related, unless there is contrary evidence.
- The presumption would apply to firefighters who experience a heart injury (i.e., heart attack, cardiac arrest or arrhythmia) within 24 hours of responding to an emergency.
- The presumption would apply to specific types of cancers, provided the firefighter had been exposed to the hazards of a fire scene over the minimum period of service, as indicated below.

Type of Cancer	Minimum Period	Type of Cancer	Minimum Period
Primary site brain cancer	10yrs	Primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma	20yrs
Primary site bladder cancer	15yrs	Primary site testicular cancer	10yrs
Primary site colorectal cancer	15yrs	Primary site ureter cancer	15yrs
Primary site esophageal cancer	25yrs	Primary site breast cancer	10yrs
Primary leukemia	5yrs	Multiple myeloma	15yrs
Primary site lung cancer	15yrs	Primary site prostate cancer	15yrs
Primary site kidney cancer	20yrs	Primary site skin cancer	15yrs

- For primary site lung cancer, the presumption applies only if the firefighter has been a non-smoker for 10 consecutive years prior to the initial diagnosis.

What happens if a claim is not covered?

Claims prior to the effective date of the legislative and regulatory changes, and claim for injuries and diseases not included under in the presumptive legislation, would be adjudicated like other WCB claims, based on the merits of each case and relevant policies.

Am I entitled to wage loss benefits as a volunteer firefighter?

If you are missing time from work as a result of an injury you sustained as a volunteer firefighter, your benefits will be calculated based on your pre-injury income.

WCB will calculate your benefits based on what best represents your loss of earnings.

How do I file a claim?

- First, it is important to get medical attention if required, and tell your health care provider that you feel that your symptoms are related to your work.
- Report the injury to your employer and to the WCB. Complete a Workers Report – Form 6.
- Provide the WCB with the information necessary to process your claim.

For more information, contact the Workers Compensation Board
at (902) 368-5680 or toll-free at 1-800-237-5049.