When the towers of the World Trade Center fell on 9/11, they released a massive dust cloud containing asbestos and other toxic materials. Many firefighters in New York City and other areas of the world who responded to the attacks were exposed to asbestos and other dangerous substances.

Firefighters are at risk for a range of asbestos exposures because they respond to fires involving asbestos-containing material, they work in buildings damaged by asbestos, and they are often forced to use asbestos-containing tools if an alternative is not available.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that is mined, processed, and manufactured for a variety of uses. It can cause cancer and other serious diseases if inhaled or ingested. Asbestos exposure is the leading cause of asbestos-related deaths, with mesothelioma being the most common cancer caused by asbestos.

Mesothelioma is a rare and aggressive form of cancer that develops in the lining of the lungs, abdomen, or chest. Asbestos-related lung cancer is usually caused by smoking, but each year, many people who never smoked develop lung cancer due to asbestos exposure.

Lung cancer is usually caused by smoking tobacco products, but each year, many people who never smoked develop lung cancer due to asbestos exposure.

How Can Firefighters Protect Themselves?

Firefighters should receive annual medication examinations. They should also get regular screening for occupational diseases such as lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Get Regular Screening for Occupational Diseases

The Firefighter Cancer Support Network, International Association of Fire Fighters and other groups have sponsored initiatives in offering training, firefighters must be proactive in requesting it.

Don't Bring Home Toxic Materials

Firefighters should decontaminate tools, personal protective equipment and skin using wet wipes or a hose. They should also keep debris wet to minimize the amount of dust in the air.

Decontaminate Gear Thoroughly

Firefighters should avoid bringing contaminated gear and clothes into their homes. They should wash their gear and clothes separately, and they should wash their hands before eating or touching their faces.

Avoid Breathtaking Contaminated Dust

Firefighters should be aware of asbestos in their environment and take steps to avoid breathing contaminated dust. They should also be aware of the dangers of asbestos in their equipment and clothing.

How to Identify Asbestos

Common asbestos-containing building materials included:

- Sprayed-on coating and fireproofing
- Cement floors, sheets and siding
- Adhesives for flooring, wall panels
- Fiberglass
- Insulation
- Electrical wire

How to Recognize Asbestos

Firefighters should be aware of the dangers of asbestos in their environment and take steps to avoid breathing contaminated dust. They should also be aware of the dangers of asbestos in their equipment and clothing.

Asbestos Exposure firefighters face.

In 2013, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) announced a novel initiative in offering training, firefighters must be proactive in requesting it.

Leadership and the Fight Against Asbestos

The list of asbestos products goes on. In most circumstances, these materials fall into two categories: Friable materials (such as old pipe insulation) that can release asbestos fibers and non-friable materials that do not release asbestos fibers. Friable asbestos releases fibers in a dusty form, while non-friable asbestos releases fibers in a brittle form.

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