

THE OFFICE OF
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Governor Healey Signs Bill Protecting Firefighters from Toxic Chemicals in Gear



BOSTON – Today, Governor Maura Healey signed *An Act relative to the reduction of certain toxic chemicals in firefighter personal protective equipment*, which phases out the use of toxic "forever" chemicals in firefighters' protective gear.

Poly- and perfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals have long been used in the personal protective equipment used by firefighters because of their ability to withstand high heat and repel penetration by water and oil. Today it is known that PFAS chemicals can be highly toxic at very low levels, even before the chemicals are exposed to fire. For years, firefighters and their loved ones have pointed to high rates of cancers known to be caused by PFAS amongst current and former firefighters, including breast, kidney and testicular cancer.

“Our firefighters are our heroes. They selflessly run into harm’s way to protect their neighbors. It is essential that they have comprehensive information about what’s in their protective gear so that they can make informed choices that are best for them,” said **Governor Healey**. “This bill is an important part of our efforts to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of our firefighters in Massachusetts. I’m grateful to the firefighters, family members, labor leaders and legislators who worked so hard to pass this lifesaving bill.”

“Thanks to the advocacy of firefighters and their loved ones, the dangers of PFAS chemicals have been known to us for years,” said **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll**. “Today, Massachusetts is taking a stand and putting the safety of our firefighters first by phasing out the use of these chemicals that have caused so much harm to our heroes and our communities.”

“Cancer is the leading cause of death in the fire service,” said **Public Safety and Security Secretary Terrence Reidy**. “This legislation marks a vital first step in phasing out harmful PFAS chemicals in firefighter gear that can contribute to that risk. Governor Healey’s action today adds an important tool to our firefighter cancer awareness, detection, and early prevention toolbox.”

“PFAS chemicals are a growing and persistent threat to our health, contaminating our water supplies and poisoning our environment. Eliminating these toxic substances from firefighter gear improves the health of firefighters and the health of all of our communities,” said **Public Health Commissioner Robbie Goldstein, MD, PhD**.

Under this legislation, effective January 1, 2025, manufacturers and sellers of personal protective equipment for firefighters containing PFAS chemicals will be required to provide written notice to the purchaser, at the time of sale, stating that the equipment contains PFAS chemicals; the reason the equipment contains PFAS chemicals, and the specific PFAS chemicals in the product.

Effective January 1, 2027, manufacturers and sellers of personal protective equipment for firefighters will be prohibited from knowingly selling gear containing “intentionally-added PFAS” chemicals, meaning PFAS chemicals or products that break down into PFAS chemicals that are intentionally added to the product during manufacturing.

“PFAS is a significant threat to the public and our firefighters who put their lives on the line every day to protect us,” said **Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell**. “I am proud of the advocates who fought so hard for these protections and grateful to the state legislature and Governor Healey for getting this bill across the finish line. My office remains committed to banning the use of PFAS in Massachusetts and advocating for state and federal resources to address the harms they cause.”

“As we continue to learn more about the dangers of PFAS, it’s important to protect our firefighters from the harmful chemicals that exist in their turnout gear,” said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka**. “They protect us and it’s time for us to protect them, as occupational cancer is one of the leading causes of death for firefighters. I’m thankful to bill sponsor Senator Cyr, my Senate colleagues and our partners in the House for their leadership and to Governor Healey for signing this important legislation into law today.”

“It’s imperative that we ensure that our firefighters aren’t being exposed to toxic chemicals while serving our Commonwealth. With this legislation, we are doing just that,” said **House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano**. “I want to thank Governor Healey for signing these critical reforms into law, along with Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan and my colleagues in the House, as well as our partners in the Senate, for sending this bill to the Governor’s desk for her signature.”

“As an original sponsor of this legislation, I want to express my sincerest gratitude to Senators Cyr and Moore, alongside of all legislators who worked hard to ensure this bill advanced to Governor Healey for her signature,” said **State Auditor Diana DiZoglio**. “We agree – our firefighters are among the most hardworking, selfless people in Massachusetts, operating under the most dangerous of conditions while risking their own lives to save others. For their dedication to our communities, we must do all we can to provide them with the supports they need to do this invaluable work.”

“As co-chair of the Massachusetts Interagency PFAS Task Force, we learned of all the ways that per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) substances cause harm to our environment, our water supplies, and to our personal health. Firefighters provided powerful testimony about the likelihood that PFAS in their turnout gear contributes to higher occupational rates of cancer and shared testimony about the effectiveness of low-PFAS turnout gear that was tested in Massachusetts. While we will continue to work on legislation to remove and regulate the use of PFAS, we applaud the passage of this bill that will phase out PFAS in firefighters’ personal protective gear,” said **Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan (D - Stow)**. “I would like to thank my co-chair and friend, Senator Julian Cyr, for his leadership on this complex, emerging issue and Governor Maura Healey for her support this Session.”

“Firefighters in Massachusetts put their lives on the line every day on behalf of our communities, and yet it is the exposure to the forever chemicals known as PFAS in their turnout gear that pose one of the greatest risks to their health,” said **Senator Julian Cyr (D-Truro), co-chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health**. “This legislation marks a critical first step forward in our efforts to mitigate the contamination of and eliminate

exposure to these harmful forever chemicals. I am grateful to Speaker Pro Tempore Kate Hogan for her continued partnership on this issue, and to Governor Healey for signing this critical legislation into law today."

As Attorney General, AG Healey [sued manufacturers of toxic PFAS chemicals](#) for ignoring the serious risks they pose to public health, the environment, and drinking water. As Governor, she has supported the state's 'take-back' program, in which the state Departments of Environmental Protection and Fire Services partner to collect PFAS-containing foam and properly dispose of it, as well as provided funding for equipment and screening programs to protect firefighters from occupational cancer.

Statements of Support:

Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury):

"Today is an extraordinary day for firefighters across the Commonwealth. With the stroke of her pen, Governor Healey is putting turnout gear manufacturers who use toxic PFAS chemicals on notice that Massachusetts won't tolerate the poisoning of our brave firefighters. Beginning in 2027, firefighter personal protective equipment made with these carcinogens will no longer be sold in the Bay State, incentivizing these industries to innovate newer and safer solutions or lose our valuable market. In the meantime, it requires sellers to be transparent about what PFAS chemicals are used in their equipment, because the heroic men and women who put on these uniforms deserve to know. This is a monumental step forward in ensuring that our firefighters can enjoy longer, healthier lives. Today, I'm celebrating this victory for safety and innovation with everyone who fought for it tirelessly for years, including our incredible partners Diane Cotter and the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts."

State Representative Jim Hawkins (D-Bristol):

"My office originally filed this bill in 2019 in collaboration with The Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts and Clean Water Action. With each legislative session, we refiled, improved upon the language, and aided in the unwavering dedication of PFFM as they advocated tirelessly for their members. With support and input from colleagues in the House, Senate, and our executive branch it is both joyous and a relief to finally witness the signing of this important legislation. Despite improvements in cancer care, our firefighters are still becoming sick and dying from occupational cancers at a rate more than twice the general population. Governor Healey and her administration know it is our duty to protect those who protect us. I am proud to have played a part in this momentous passing"

Rick MacKinnon, President, Professional Firefighters Association of Massachusetts:

"This is the strongest language in the nation when it comes to banning PFAS in firefighter turnout gear. Showing that Massachusetts is leading the way in taking care of their firefighters. This is a great step in our fight against firefighter occupational cancer and will save the lives of our firefighters for generations to come."

David Melly, Legislative Director, Environmental League of Massachusetts:

“PFAS contamination in our water, soil, and consumer products is a threat to public health – and we certainly shouldn’t be putting these harmful chemicals on the literal backs of first responders. The prevalence and persistence of PFAS is one of the great environmental health hazards of our time, and ELM is pleased the Governor and the Legislature are taking this step to address one of its most high-risk uses.”

Laura Spark, Clean Water/Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow:

“For too long, Massachusetts firefighters have been unnecessarily exposed to high levels of PFAS in their personal protective equipment and they have paid the price, with high levels of occupational cancer, reproductive problems and other illnesses. With this new law, Massachusetts leaders are joining our neighbors in Connecticut as the first two states to restrict toxic PFAS in firefighter personal protective equipment. This is legislation which will save firefighter lives and encourage other states to take similar action.”

Diane Cotter, activist and wife of Lt. Paul Cotter (ret'd) of the Worcester Fire Department:

“Paul and I rejoice today as this historical signing promises commitment to firefighters facing staggering odds of occupational cancer in Massachusetts. The signing falls just weeks prior to Paul's 10-year cancer diagnosis, ending his career and leading us to the discover the staggering amounts of PFAS in turnout gear. While the road was long and often contentious, we could not be more grateful to Governor Healey today as she signs this bill into law. We honor the Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts, Last Call Foundation, the science community, environmental groups, and the monumental work of Senator Michael Moore and Representative Jim Hawkins for leading the battleground efforts in 2017 when we began crafting the strongest language in the nation with (then) Senator Diana DiZoglio. Today we rejoice in this magnificent signing!”

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