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“Chemical Agents of Opportunity” Training

The threat of a chemical terrorist attack has changed from a traditional state-sponsored military-style weapon to a more easily obtainable “agent of opportunity” that could be assembled and used by almost anyone. This possibility raises a number of concerns and preparedness challenges, especially to medical first responders and healthcare facilities.

The 12-part webinar training “[Chemical Agents of Opportunity for Terrorism: Toxic Industrial Chemicals \(TICs\) and Toxic Industrial Materials \(TIMs\)](#)” is available through the American College of Medical Toxicologists (ACMT) to target this problem. Geared toward state and local first responders, emergency response coordinators, public health officials, industrial hygienists, and others involved with terrorism preparedness and response, the course takes a symptom-based approach to demonstrate the medical impact of chemical poisons.

Of the 12 webinars scheduled, all but three have already been held and are available as recordings, which enables the student to go through the training at their own pace. They include topics such as neurotoxins; water, food, and medication as vectors; agricultural chemicals; and inhalation of toxic industrial gases. The three remaining webinars:

- February 10, 2016: Delayed-Onset Toxins
- March 2016: Post-Event Medical Monitoring
- April 2016: Tabletop Exercise

The course is intended to assist emergency responders and medical workers understand chemical agents of opportunity, identify chemical agents that could be used, recognize the health effects, learn the primary methods of a potential attack, and recognize the secondary impacts of mass chemical exposure.

(Source: [ACMT](#))

Health Needs of Older Adults During Disasters

The National Center for Disaster Medicine and Public Health (NCDMPH) has a new curriculum “[Caring for Older Adults in Disasters: A Curriculum for Health Professionals](#).” The program is intended for health professionals from many different work settings who work with older adults.

The curriculum contains seven modules with 24 lessons covering topics such as Background on the Older Adult Population; Chronic and Acute Conditions; Medication; Assistive Technology; Disaster Human Services; and Ethical and Legal Issues. One module focuses on how specific disasters, such as hurricanes or extreme temperatures, require different types of considerations when managing older populations.

The NCDMPH was established as the “academic center of excellence in disaster medicine and public health” by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 21. It works to establish standardized curricula and competencies in disaster medicine and public health education. The NCDMPH offers other training, topical resource pages, and curriculum recommendations.

(Source: [NCDMPH](#))

Firefighter Cancer Webinar for Volunteers

Firefighters are statistically more likely than the general population to develop cancer, but research on cancer in the fire services has not been as inclusive as it could be when determining the cancer rate of volunteer firefighters. Statistics as a whole are also filled with gaps, but there are two things that keep showing up: the number of firefighters being diagnosed with cancer is increasing, and it is being linked more and more with the job.

These facts coupled with the difficulties volunteers have obtaining appropriate gear and their lack of protections under the law are prompting some to call for legal action to provide volunteers with “presumptive cancer coverage,” basically stating if a volunteer firefighter who was determined healthy prior to fire service work was later diagnosed with cancer, it would be presumptive evidence that “it was incurred in the performance and discharge of duty” unless contrary evidence was provided. [New York](#), for example, is considering such a law.

However, through changes in personal behavior and organizational culture, it may be possible to turn this problem around. The [Firefighter Cancer Support Network](#) has these [recommendations for volunteer firefighters](#) to take charge of their health:

- Clean your gear – recognize your turnout gear is not just “dirty,” it is contaminated with carcinogens. [Clean it regularly](#);
- Collect your exposure data – by logging the calls you go on, you can help make the case that your cancer was caused by your job if you ever receive a cancer diagnosis;
- Ask for help – if you do receive a cancer diagnosis, the Firefighter Cancer Support Network is there to help and support you and your family.

A new on-demand webinar by the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) seeks to raise awareness of the threat of cancer to the volunteer fire service. “[Cancer in the Fire Services: A Growing Epidemic](#)” discusses the scope of the cancer problem in the fire services, the role of the fire chief, why everyone should keep exposure records, and steps governing jurisdictions can take to help. More resources are available on [NVFC’s Cancer Hot Topic page](#).

(Source: [Firefighter Cancer Support Network](#))

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