

NOVEMBER 2023

FIRE & RESCUE HEALTHY NEWS

Brought to you by the South Heartland District Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Keep yourself healthy against the Triple Threat

Keep yourself healthy against
Influenza, Covid-
19/monovalent, and RSV, with
vaccinations.

Check the South Heartland
District Health Department
website for more information
about when and where you can
get updated immunizations.

[southheartlandhealth.ne.gov/
what-we-do/immunizations/](http://southheartlandhealth.ne.gov/what-we-do/immunizations/)



National Alliance on Mental Illness

For more information, visit:
www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Frontline-Professionals/Public-Safety-Professionals



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*Thank you for
your constant
service to your
communities!*

First Responders and Lung Cancer

Asbestos is one of the many harmful toxins that first responders encounter regularly in the line of duty. Those entering burning, crumbling, or destroyed building structures that contain air pollutants from smoke and other harmful materials run the risk of being exposed. First responders also risk coming in contact with other harmful air pollutants (HAPs) and chemicals like smog, radon, lead, and carbon monoxide among others.

First responders who helped during the 9/11 attacks were also dangerously exposed to toxic dust that contained asbestos and other pollutants and are now, a couple of decades later, beginning to see the harmful effects on their health. After dangerous levels of exposure, it can sometimes take over 20 years for lung cancer or other related-disease to develop.

Tips for Avoiding Contamination

- Wear adequate face, body, and hand coverings when entering burning, crumbling, or otherwise decomposed building structures that could be surrounded by toxic dust
- After the job is complete, take off coverings and wash them or store them somewhere contained to be cleaned
- Take a shower at the station or work facility before coming home
- If working indoors, ensure the area is properly ventilated or utilize fans, respirators, and air filters

Other common respiratory illnesses among first responders

- **ASBESTOSIS:** When asbestos fibers get lodged around the lung tissues, the tiny fibers begin to scratch and irritate the area. After as many as 10 years of this happening, the tissues get scarred, causing respiratory issues like wheezing, trouble breathing, and excessive cough. Asbestosis can be the preliminary disease to more serious illnesses for first responders further down the line.
- **ASTHMA:** After being exposed to harmful air pollutants for a long enough period, eventually, a person could develop asthma, an illness that is characterized by airways becoming sensitive, swelling, and getting narrow more easily when triggered. During an asthma attack, the airways may also produce excessive mucus and the person can have trouble breathing smoothly.
- **PLEURAL MESOTHELIOMA:** If malignant tumors develop in the tissue lining the lungs (pleura), this is known as pleural mesothelioma. Symptoms can include sore throat, chronic cough, and chest pain among others.
- **PNEUMONITIS:** Refers to the condition of inflamed lung tissue caused by an infection. This inflammation in the lung tissue could cause chest pain, excessive cough, and sore throat.

First responders should visit their doctor immediately if they begin to develop any of the above symptoms.

Helpful Resources

The Centers for Disease Control has several resources helpful for first responders. Visit <https://emergency.cdc.gov/chemical/responders.asp> to learn more about keeping your lungs safe against harmful components.

You can also visit the Lung Cancer Center website for more information:
<https://www.lungcancercenter.com/who-lung-cancer-affects/first-responders/>

World Trade Center Health Program:
<https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/>