



Major Fire Service Organizations Call for Priority Access to COVID-19 Vaccines

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The International Association of Fire Chiefs, International Association of Fire Fighters, National Association of State Fire Marshals, and National Volunteer Fire Council urge governors and state health officials to make career and volunteer fire fighters, EMTs, and paramedics a top priority level for COVID-19 vaccines. We are vital parts of the national public health system and should be treated at the same priority as other front-line healthcare workers, and hospital staff.

The nation's fire fighters, EMTs, and paramedics serve as the first link in the COVID-19 response. These environments are unstructured, unprotected and place public safety personnel in close quarters with COVID-19 patients, causing increased exposure for the responder. Many COVID-19 patients are treated by a fire fighter, EMT, or paramedic before they are transported to a medical facility for further care. In addition, fire fighters, EMTs, and paramedics often respond to emergencies unrelated to whether a caller has COVID-19 only to later learn that the individual exposed them to the virus.

A COVID-19 vaccine is one of the best ways to protect fire and EMS personnel from this pandemic. Along with ensuring that the proper PPE is available, priority access to a vaccine allows emergency responders to have another tool to protect themselves and the community as a whole. Scientific reports have indicated that fire fighters, EMTs, and paramedics are proportionately far more likely to contract COVID-19 than the general public due to their on-the-job exposures.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine recommended that fire and EMS personnel be listed as Priority Tier 1A for receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. We are concerned that states and local government may not adopt the recommendations of this esteemed panel, and instead relegate fire and EMS personnel to a lower priority tier.

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