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IAFF Seeks Study on Health Hazards of Cell Phone Tower Radiation

"There currently is no good scientific study that determines whether or not cell towers on fire stations are hurting our members, so a study must be done," says IAFF General President Harold Schaitberger. "Fire fighters are already at a higher risk of injury and illness from the hazards of their job, but we will not tolerate our members being put in additional danger while at the station house from exposure to low-intensity radio frequency and microwave radiation from these cell towers and antennas.

"Until the health effects are truly tested and known, the IAFF believes no additional cell towers or antennas should be positioned on or near fire stations.

It is the general belief of international governments and of the wireless telecommunications industry that no consistent increases in health risk exist from exposure to radio frequency radiation. However, it's important to note that these positions are based on non-continuous exposures to the general public to low intensity radio frequency fields emitted from wireless telecommunications base stations.

"Critical questions concerning the health effects and safety of radio frequency microwave radiation remain," says Schaitberger. "We want answers, not the biased opinions of cell phone industry groups."

Most studies on this subject are at least five years old and generally look at the safety of the phone itself. IAFF is concerned about the effects of living directly under these stations for a considerable stationary period of time and on a daily basis.

The IAFF and its medical team believe a study with the highest scientific merit and integrity, contrasting fire fighters with residence in stations with towers to fire fighters without similar exposure, is necessary to truly determine the effects of radio frequency radiation on the central nervous system (CNS) and the immune system, as well as other metabolic effects observed in preliminary studies.

Biological effects from exposure to low-level radio frequency microwave radiation have been recognized as markers of adverse health effects. Internationally acknowledged experts have shown that radio frequency microwave radiation transmissions of the type used in digital cellular antennas and phones can have critical effects on cell cultures, animals and humans in laboratories.

Studies have also found epidemiological evidence of serious health effects at "non-thermal" levels where the intensity of the radiation was too low to cause heating, including increased cell growth of brain cancer cells, changes in tumor growth, more childhood leukemia, changes in sleep patterns, headaches and neurological changes, decreased memory, retarded learning, increased blood pressure and other health hazards.

The IAFF's efforts will attempt to establish a correlation between such biological effects and a health risk to fire fighters and emergency medical personnel due to the citing of cell phone antennas and base stations at fire stations and facilities where they work.