

Testimony on HB 27

Dale Arkenburg

My name is Dale Arkenburg and I am the Chief at Geneva Fire Department in Ashtabula County. I have come through the ranks as part time/volunteer, part time, full time career, Lieutenant and now Chief.

I would like to present to the committee some thoughts on one of the proposed changes that have been put forth. The one in particular is the part that discusses the firefighter and the wearing of protective ensemble and its components. Additionally, putting the adherence to wearing of said components on the employer and/or managers of the fire scenes. I would like to present some thoughts that I feel need to be considered with the ultimate goal of getting the proposed wording stricken. Here is a list of the points I would like to make:

1. The environments we operate in are very complex and very rigorous. Especially in and around fire scenes there are numerous factors both in the burning materials and associated smoke as well as the actual structure or immediate area that make it nearly impossible for firefighters not to be exposed.
2. Many non entry members, supervisory staff and others are often providing critical scene functions without various pieces of the "full entry" ensemble. Great care is taken to train, fit test, and make sure some of the latest best practices are being followed but the fact remains that we are still being exposed to the toxins that are causing cancers.
3. The apparatus we use is being subjected to these same carcinogens and over time the use of the apparatus and its exposures are sure add to the members exposures.
3. Our ensemble has a variety of protective qualities but by no means is meant to be a perfect sealed system that can protect us against the wide variety of chemical toxins. The dynamic nature of chemicals and the synergistic effects of chemicals combining or reacting is a very complex and again nearly impossible task to provide an ensemble that would be an "all hazards" protection.
4. I am concerned about the time frames mentioned of 20 years being reduced to 15 and the maximum age of which a firefighter can be considered. In all aspects of our profession; volunteer, combination and fully paid, there are members that will exceed the max age being discussed as some may still be active members contributing in some way to their local region.

I present these concerns on behalf of the firefighting profession and respectfully ask that they be taken into consideration.

Respectfully,

Chief Dale S. Arkenburg
Geneva Fire Department