

# Protect Firefighters From Toxic Chemicals

- **Many common household products** contain chemicals that when combined with smoke and carbon monoxide create serious risks for firefighters. Though the chemicals were designed to slow the spread of flames, studies show they are ineffective. But these toxic substances have been linked to **increased risk of cancer and respiratory ailments**.
- **The International Association of Firefighters'** top health official has called chemical flame retardants “**the largest health-related issue facing the firefighting profession.**” Pat Morrison said that when the chemicals burn, firefighters face serious health threats “from the air they breathe and absorption through skin during and after working on a fire.”
- **H 5082 and S 166** would require manufacturers of upholstered furniture, bedding and children’s products to phase out a class of flame retardant chemicals linked to the most serious ailments. Firefighters have three times the levels of these chemicals in their blood as the general adult population.
- **Chief Richard Susi, Ret. of the RI Association of Fire Chiefs, Paul Valleta Jr.** of the RI State Association of Firefighters and Donna McDonald, vice president of the Firefighters Cancer Support Network have testified in support of our legislation. Firefighters in Massachusetts and Minnesota have co-sponsored similar bills. 12 other states have passed laws to restrict flame retardants.
- **Children also face health risks** due to prolonged low-level exposure. The chemicals off-gas from products, bind with dust and can be inhaled and ingested by toddlers putting toys, fingers and other objects in their mouths. The chemicals have been linked to **learning disabilities, nervous system disorders and lowered IQs**.
- **Safer options are available.** Many retailers offer furniture free of these chemicals and some (Ashley, Crate & Barrel, Macy’s, Ikea) have pledged to stop using them entirely. Many RI retailers offer lines of furniture that are flame-retardant free.



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