

Press Release

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Dräger launches ‘Health for the Firefighter’ campaign in response to firefighters’ health concerns

Press Release

Dräger, an international leader in medical and safety technology, is launching its ‘Health for the Firefighter’ campaign to support fire services in driving the cultural changes that are required to protect firefighter health.

The launch follows a survey* of UK firefighters that found considerable concern over the impact of exposure to contaminants on long-term health. Some 84% admitted they were concerned about the risk of cancer – a disease highlighted in some scientific reports to be the leading cause of death within the service.

The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) reports that nearly two out of three (61%) firefighter line-of-duty deaths between 2002 and 2017 were caused by cancer. Embedded carcinogens in any equipment can easily be absorbed by the men and women using it.

The survey by Dräger also found that more than two thirds (68%) of firefighters fear the impact of Covid-19 on their long-term health, a point picked up by Brian Hesler, Consultant and Specialist Advisor at [Draeger Safety UK](#) and former Chief Fire Officer for the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service:

“The Covid-19 pandemic, and the ongoing fears over cancer, have highlighted the critical importance of hygiene, and a significant cultural change is required. We need to move away from firefighters wearing dirty kit like a badge of honour that proves their hard work and value, to understanding that clean and well-maintained kit supported by detailed and robust hygiene processes that mitigate every contact with contaminants are essential.

“One firefighter surveyed said ‘they had always been a bit blasé about invisible contaminants’. This has got to change.”

The Health for the Firefighter campaign will support the fire services in helping to communicate and provide training on the importance of detailed hygiene processes;

Contact

UK Press contact:
Jenny Rowe
Tel. +44 7786 572111
jenny.rowe@draeger.com

Communications:
Melanie Kamann
Tel +49 451 882-3998
melanie.kamann@draeger.com

Press contact:
Caroline Sophie Schröder
Tel. +49 451 882-3179
carolinesophie.schroeder@draeger.com

Investor Relations:
Thomas Fischler
Tel +49 451 882-2685
thomas.fischler@draeger.com

Drägerwerk AG & Co. KGaA
Moislinger Allee 53-55
23558 Lübeck, Germany
www.draeger.com

www.twitter.com/DraegerNews
www.facebook.com/DraegerGlobal
www.youtube.com/Draeger

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from the handling and storage of masks and breathing apparatus (BA) equipment through to the subsequent cleaning of the kit after an incident has occurred.

It will also provide bespoke workshop solutions that guide the potentially contaminated kit from entering the station, to washing and drying processes through to leaving the station to be used again.

In addition to providing detailed advice for manual washing processes including on detergent use and drying techniques, Dräger is the first company in the Emergency Services space to launch specialist BA and mask cleaning equipment and dedicated solutions, including mechanical washing systems that provide complete consistency in washing temperatures, the amount of detergent used, speed and temperature of drying – which can all work together to disinfect contaminants and to protect the longevity of the kit. Support also encompasses logistical support for installation, the ongoing maintenance of equipment and the quantity of stock required.

The survey revealed the most important factors in combating firefighter concerns over contaminants were the cleaning of masks with 97% rating this as very or extremely important, closely followed by the cleaning of BA equipment (95%) and cleaning of PPE (94%).

While manual cleaning of equipment is still generally the norm within UK Fire Services, the survey revealed three quarters (75%) believed that mechanical equipment washing would improve their health, and 80% agreed that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic more emphasis should be placed on cleaning equipment and hygiene control. However, only 23% said that the pandemic had significantly changed their approach to cleaning equipment.

“There is obvious concern over cleaning of equipment following the pandemic,” adds Brian. “One surveyed firefighter said ‘they clean to the best of their ability’ – the point is that a person’s ability should not be a factor in the cleaning process. Consistency has to be key and manufacturers of medical and safety technology products have a responsibility to innovate solutions that support change. We are not here to tell brigades how to operate, rather to provide a range of solutions that support them and their firefighters’ health.”

*Survey conducted in July 2020, including 122 responses from people working in the UK Fire Services.

Contact

UK Press contact:
Jenny Rowe
Tel. +44 7786 572111
jenny.rowe@draeger.com

Communications:
Melanie Kamann
Tel +49 451 882-3998
melanie.kamann@draeger.com

Press contact:
Caroline Sophie Schröder
Tel. +49 451 882-3179
carolinesophie.schroeder@draeger.com

Investor Relations:
Thomas Fischler
Tel +49 451 882-2685
thomas.fischler@draeger.com

Drägerwerk AG & Co. KGaA
Moislinger Allee 53-55
23558 Lübeck, Germany
www.draeger.com

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For further press information please contact:

Gravity Global – +4420 7330 8810

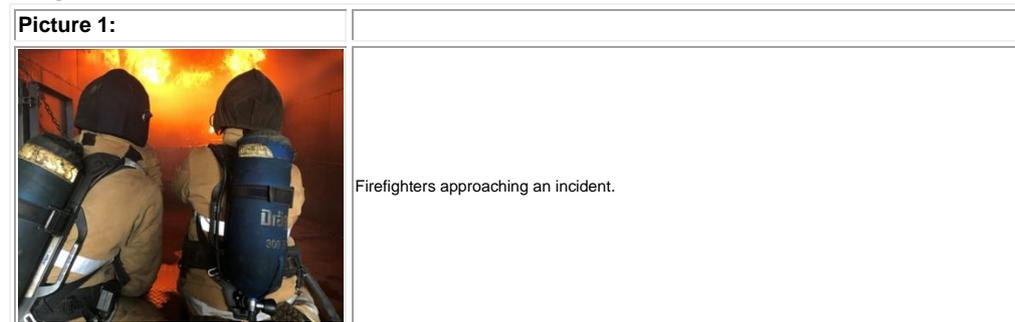
Imogen Hart – ihart@gravityglobal.com

Iona Yadallee – iyadallee@gravityglobal.com

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Contact

UK Press contact:
Jenny Rowe
Tel. +44 7786 572111
Jenny.rowe@draeger.com

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Melanie Kamann
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