STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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ROBERT GORDON
DIRECTOR

June 26, 2020

Greetings,

During these uncertain times, we at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) would first like to acknowledge the risks you take every single day to protect public health. We recognize the increased risk and burden placed upon you and your families during the COVID-19 crisis. We thank you for your dedication to serving Michiganders every day, and especially during this crisis.

We are writing to you to let you know about a new project focused on Michigan firefighters and their exposure to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). The PFAS in Firefighters of Michigan Surveillance (PFOMS) project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The purpose of the PFOMS project is to better understand the risk of job-related exposure to PFAS in a sample of Michigan firefighters.

Building connections through PFOMS
MDHHS is proud to have the opportunity to support this public health project with Michigan firefighters. MDHHS is working closely with Michigan's State Fire Marshal, Kevin Sehlmeyer, to increase awareness of the project and provide public health information on PFAS to local departments and stations.

"*This project is an excellent opportunity to measure PFAS exposure among Michigan firefighters from their use of Class B AFFF (aqueous film forming foam). I hope that you will consider participating so that we can better understand our exposure to this group of chemicals, which have been linked to disease in nationwide research.*"

-Kevin Sehlmeyer, State Fire Marshal

MDHHS is also collaborating with the Michigan Professional Fire Fighters Union (MPFFU) to talk with member groups about the project and incorporate community ideas in the project's outreach campaign. Together, MDHHS and MPFFU plan to host interactive webinar sessions to provide more insight into the project. We are also seeking opportunities to partner with fire departments on health education and outreach at local neighborhood events.

"*The MPFFU is excited to partner with MDHHS and the State Fire Marshal in the surveillance project related to PFAS exposure in Michigan firefighters. Through this partnership we hope to gain clearer insight as to how much exposure firefighters have to these chemicals in our workplaces and develop ways to minimize these exposures in the future*."

-Steven Heim, 4th District Vice President

How the project will work?
Over the next 3.5 years, MDHHS will invite all firefighters from Michigan airport fire departments and stations, along with a randomly selected sample of municipal fire departments and stations, to participate in the PFOMS project. Participants will include current career and volunteer adult firefighters.

Participants will be asked to answer survey questions about ways they could have been exposed to PFAS. This will include questions about the use of Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), and possible non-occupational PFAS exposure sources including diet and drinking water. Participants will also be asked to provide a blood sample. An MDHHS-owned mobile clinic will travel to fire stations to make blood sample collections convenient for participants. In addition, fire departments and stations that participate will have their drinking water tested for PFAS.
The project has the potential to inform and improve best practices for minimizing PFAS exposure in firefighter activities, trainings, and educational programs across Michigan.

What's happening next?
MDHHS will start phoning fire departments over the next few weeks to gather basic information, including the number of fire stations in each department, station location, station's water source and the number of firefighters at each station. MDHHS plans to collect this information from all fire departments in Michigan over the next few years.

How can I learn more about PFOMS or get involved?
To provide guidance on this project, MDHHS is forming a stakeholder group. The stakeholder group will function as a key voice for firefighter community concerns and priorities relating to the PFOMS project. By participating in periodic meetups with the study team and providing feedback, members of the firefighter community will also help inform and assist MDHHS in outreach activities for the project.

If you or your group is interested in learning more about PFOMS or how to get involved, please contact the community outreach coordinator for the project:

- Daniel Bator, Division of Environmental Health at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (517-648-8315 ; mdhhs-pfoms@michigan.gov)

Thank you for your dedicated service to Michigan communities. The project team looks forward to connecting with you soon!

Sincerely,

Matthew Geiger
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