

HB 2817 -- WORKERS' COMPENSATION FOR CERTAIN FIRST RESPONDERS

SPONSOR: Sauls

This bill allows firefighters, firefighter paramedics, and firefighter emergency medical technicians to receive Workers' Compensation Benefits for diseases of the heart or cardiovascular system, any infectious diseases, diseases of the body systems or organs from carcinoma, and diseases of the lungs or respiratory tract. Any such disease contracted by paid, volunteer, or retired firefighters, paramedics, or emergency medical technicians will be presumed to be an occupational disease if there is reasonable medical evidence that the employee was free of the disease at the beginning of his or her employment. The employer of the firefighter or first responder has a duty to provide reasonable medical evidence. If the employer does not provide reasonable medical evidence, then the firefighters, paramedics, or emergency medical technicians will have the benefit of the presumption regardless of the absence of medical evidence.

Diseases of the body systems or organs from carcinoma are presumed to be references to cancer and an occupational disease if:

- (1) The firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician has been assigned to at least five years of "hazardous duty" as defined in the bill,
- (2) The firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician was exposed to an agent classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer,
- (3) Fewer than 20 years have elapsed since the firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician was last assigned to hazardous duty; and
- (4) At the time of the diagnosis of cancer, the firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician was under the age of 70.

However, this presumption can be rebutted, as described in the bill.

The bill creates a presumption for "psychological stress" and "mental disorder" to be recognized as occupational diseases contracted in the course and scope of employment, if medical services are required or there is a resulting physical or mental disability. A firefighter, paramedic, or emergency medical technician or a paid police officer of a paid police department who is diagnosed with psychological stress or a mental disorder during

employment or within three years of the last active date of employment, is eligible for compensation benefits.

The bill requires the Division of Workers' Compensation within the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to prepare and submit a report regarding presumed cancer claims before August 28, 2025, and an updated report every two years thereafter. This report shall be provided to the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the President Pro Tem and the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Missouri Association of Fire Chiefs, the Fire Fighters Association of Missouri, and the Missouri Municipal League.

This bill is similar to HB 568 (2023).