

**Alaska State Chamber of Commerce  
2008 Position**

**Oppose Workers' Compensation Presumption  
For Diseases of First Responders**

The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce opposes proposals to expand the current workers' compensation law to include presumptions of liability for cancers and blood borne diseases for first responders.

There is a national effort promoting state-by-state legislation to place fire fighters in a preferred category where they would not be subject to the same proof requirements for occupational injuries or illnesses as all other workers, both public and private sector. Cardiovascular events, respiratory problems, and cancer will be presumed to be work related. The proposals would require tax-payer funded municipalities to prove a negative: that the firefighter's cancer, for example, was NOT caused by the job.

- These occupational injuries and illnesses are already covered under the workers' compensation act.
- Providing a broader presumption for first responders is discriminatory.
- This opens the door to the addition of additional occupations for preferred treatment.
- The presumption would be very expensive, raising local taxes and negatively affecting Alaska business.
- The diseases have heredity and lifestyle causes. Occupational causation claimed by the proponents is not supported by science.
- Alaska continues to rank number one in terms of workers' compensation premiums paid by employers. The workers' compensation system does not need to be expanded at this time.