



## You and Your PPE; Part 4

In this issue we will be discussing the process for inspecting, cleaning and repairing PPE. Lets address the elephant in the room, the days of the rough tough firefighter walking around in their dirty burnt up gear are over! Ok you have been to a couple of fires. Show that you give a damn about yourself and your fellow firefighters and get your PPE cleaned or replaced. Firefighters need to educate themselves about the dangers and the health concerns of wearing contaminated PPE!

**Inspecting Your PPE:** PPE should be inspected at regular intervals to ensure it has not been damaged or contaminated to a point that would interfere with its ability to protect the wearer.

**Routine Inspection:** Should be conducted at the beginning of your shift or duty time and after every incident that has the potential to contaminate or damage it, i.e. fires, vehicle accidents, ems calls, haz-mat incidents and training. Routine inspection can be performed by the user to check for soiling and contamination, rips and tears, reflective trim effectiveness, seam integrity and any discoloration or burnt charred material.

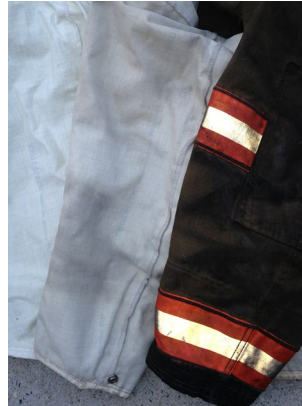
**Advanced Inspection:** Is recommended to be conducted every 12 months. This testing can only be conducted by an Independent Service Provider or a trained certified member of your department

**Cleaning and Decontamination:** Your PPE should be cleaned at regular intervals to ensure that the ensemble and its components are not putting the wearer at increased risk.

**Routine Cleaning:** Should be done after each use wear your were subjected to contamination such as the products of combustion blood or bodily fluids, chemicals and hazardous materials, oil, fuels and grease. Routine cleaning can be performed by the user on scene or back at your station. Your PPE can be hosed off and cleaned using mild non-abrasive detergents.

**Advanced Cleaning:** Should be done every 12 months. The cleaning is done by machine and must be conducted by an Independent Service Provider or a trained and certified member of your department .

**Repair of Your PPE:** Any repairs or modifications done to your PPE must be performed by the manufacturer or a certified and trained Independent Service Provider. Any gear needing repair will subjected to advanced cleaning and inspection before any repair work is done. Many firefighters attach a company patch to the sleeve of their PPE to show company pride. The problem is when they sew it on themselves. Every whole your sewing needle makes in the material has to be sealed in order for the gear to be certified as safe to wear other wise every one of those tiny wholes is an avenue for heat to penetrate your outer shell and burn you!



Notice the discoloration of the moisture barrier sleeve this is due to excessive heat penetrating the outer shell it was found during a routine



Heavily soiled and contaminated PPE will not provide the same thermal insulation and thermal stability as clean PPE.

By Bryan T Smith

A recent study conducted by the Firefighter Cancer Support Network recommended the following action be taken in relation to PPE to help lower the odds of firefighter cancer.

1. Do gross field decon to remove as much soot and particulates as possible
2. Clean your PPE, gloves, hood and helmet immediately after a fire.
3. Do not take contaminated PPE home or store it in your vehicle.
4. Keep bunker gear out of living and sleeping quarters.

How many of us are already doing this?  
How many of us need to start doing this?



The PPE on the left has been in service for four years and is heavily soiled and contaminated with carcinogens of fires long past.

The PPE on the right has only been in service for 4 months and is lightly soiled. Which PPE would you want protecting you