

Dear Mr. Bennett,

I learned of the July 12th conference at UC and read the attached article regarding firefighters' cancer associated with soot and the need to clean their turnout gear.

I found the article to be very interesting. My late husband, Steve Smith from E-49 in Madisonville, passed away from stomach cancer on June 30, 2007. He was diagnosed on Jan. 25, 2007; unfortunately, it was already at stage 4. Steve never smoked nor drank and ultimately, his death was ruled as related to his job. He was only 45.

I'm curious to know if the soot could have been a culprit as well. Steve maybe cleaned his turnout gear once a year and NEVER cleaned his helmet. He basically said that "the dirtier the helmet, the better". Sort of like a "right of passage" for firefighters. He would laugh and tell me how CLEAN the helmets were of all the district chiefs (aka never actually going into a fire).

I ask that you stress to all in attendance, the importance of ALWAYS wearing their breathing apparatus, even if they are involved in an outdoor fire. (Steve was at an outdoor fire in the early 90's; a tire fire that burned for days; he was at E-38 at the time in Winton Place). He and a lot of the guys didn't wear their masks. At the time of Steve's diagnosis, he learned that at least 2 to 3 other firefighters from E-38 that worked that fire, were eventually diagnosed with cancer.

Please keep me "in the loop" regarding any information gained from this upcoming conference; as I now live in West Lafayette, IN. and cannot attend.

Thank you,

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