



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT INFO. :

Office of the Mayor
Matthew Paddock
Communications Manager
(401) 435-7500 Ext 11013
mpaddock@eastprovidenceri.gov

East Providence Fire Department becomes first in RI to go PFAS-free

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI – The East Providence City Council voted 3-2 on Wednesday to authorize Mayor Bob DaSilva to purchase new turnout gear to protect the health and wellness of the city's fire personnel.

East Providence Fire Department will now become the first in the state to wear fire equipment eliminating the use of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

PFAS, which are often referred to as “forever chemicals”, are linked to numerous adverse health effects. According to the National Cancer Institute, as of 2023 PFAS are classified as a human carcinogen.

During the August 7, 2024 Council meeting, Fire Chief Michael Carey first thanked the Council for passing the resolution, quickly adding, “We need to get it off our people as fast as we can.”

“Our Administration is committed to ensuring we provide the best public safety services available while at the same time protecting those men and women who deliver these services for our residents,” Mayor Bob DaSilva said. “I want to thank Council President Bob Rodericks, Councilman Frank Fogerty and Councilwoman Anna Sousa for supporting this very important purchase.”

The cost of replacement gear for members of the fire department will be a total of \$658,000 and will be paid for through American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

In recent weeks, both the Massachusetts House and Senate approved bill, SB2902, which would completely prohibit the sale of firefighting gear containing PFAS by the year 2027.

“Up until recently, there were no alternatives for firefighting gear that were free from PFAS that could be found in the market,” Chief Carey said. “Upon availability, we initiated discussions with the manufacturer

to determine the most suitable PFAS-free alternative for our personnel, aiming to replace all current gear containing PFAS compounds as quickly as possible for the protection of our personnel.

“Following a thorough presentation and extensive discussion of this project with Mayor DaSilva, he promptly acknowledged the necessity of this transition and expeditiously located funding to accomplish this objective,” Carey added.

Beginning today, fire crews will undergo being fitted for their new gear. Once all fittings are complete, an order will be submitted, and it is our expectation that all gear will be manufactured, delivered, and put into service within a span of less than 90 days.