**Identify key questions to be answered**

The first step in a situational assessment is to determine what you need to inform planning decisions. Use the three broad questions and sub-questions below to shape the direction of the situational assessment and develop an outline for your situational assessment related to your health promotion issue/opportunity.

**My chosen topic is a workplace health promotion program targeting early detection and prevention of skin cancer among firefighters.**

1. **What is the situation?**

Firefighters are at increased rates of skin cancer than members of the general public (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2022).

There is research indicating that career firefighters have a 36% higher likelihood of being diagnosed with melanoma of skin than the general public (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2022), as well as other types of skin cancer (Lee et al., 2023). Among fire departments across Canada, routine skin cancer screening is not a standard of care being offered to active or retired career firefighters (Health Canada, 2024).

Skin cancer can impact quality of life, increase risk of mortality and morbidity, increased cost to the healthcare system, as well as impacts the workplace due to absences for treatment and recovery. It is valuable to view this health concern from a preventative and early detection perspective through a population health promotion lens.

Proactive skin cancer screening is currently not a common practice among fire services across Canada (Health Canada, 2024). Though, there is a growing body of literature and conversation to reduce and identify cancer among firefighters as a result of their increased risk due to occupational exposure.

1. **What influences are making the situation better and worse?**

Firefighters are exposed to various carcinogenic byproducts that may be absorbed through their skin while partaking in fire suppression and engaging in hazardous environments (Health Canada, 2024). There are already many safety procedures and personal protective equipment in place for Canadian firefighters to protective their health, however, it is not fully avoid the risk.   
Fire services across Canada put a high value on protecting the health and safety of firefighters. As well as comprehensive health and safety guidelines, firefighters are represented by the International Association of Firefighters, which have a strong presence and advocacy for health and safety. The proposed program for early detection and prevention of skin cancer is anticipated to be well-received by stakeholders such as employers, union representatives and frontline firefighters.

Weakness’s include barriers to engagement. Working shift work incurs an element of scheduling as a challenge. In addition, perceptions around trust of the employer implementing such a program may be brought with apprehension.

1. **What possible actions can you take to address the situation?**

As mentioned, it is not common practice for employers to deliver a skin cancer screening to their members of the fire service (Health Canada, 2024).

In an observational, cross-sectional study design, Glasgow et al., (2024), authors report on, among various factors, the health screening practices and cancer beliefs of American fire fighters. The report that among 171 participating firefighters of their survey, only 35% state that they participate in cancer screening, and in general, believe that actions can be taken to reduce cancer risk (Glasgow et al., 2024). Reinforcing the opportunity for a health promotion intervention.

The American Association of Dermatology Firefighter Skin Cancer Checks Program began in 2024 with a goal to provide 10,000 skin checks among American firefighters by 2026 (n.d.). This program facilitates a partnership with fire departments and local dermatologist to provide a head-to-toe skin cancer screen to firefighters.

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