



TEXAS STATE ASSOCIATION of FIRE FIGHTERS

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City of Mission Urged to Reverse Insurance Denial of Firefighter's Cancer Treatment

Firefighters face higher cancer risks; Texas 'presumptive' law covers medical care

AUSTIN, Texas, Jan. 25, 2018 –The Texas State Association of Fire Fighters (TSAFF) today urged the City of Mission to immediately reverse the denial of insurance coverage of kidney cancer treatment for Mission firefighter Homer Salinas.

The city workers' compensation administrator, TML Intergovernmental Risk Pool (TMLIRP), denied coverage for Mr. Salinas, who underwent treatment at Houston's MD Anderson Cancer Center for removal of a renal cell carcinoma mass from a kidney.

In a letter previously sent to Mayor Norberto Salinas and City Manager Martin Garza, Jr., TSAFF President John Riddle said, "We trust that you would not condone denial or delay of coverage for life-saving cancer treatment for Mr. Salinas or any city employee with a legitimate insurance claim. We urge you to immediately reverse the TMLIRP decision denying coverage – and ease the uncertainty as to whether he will receive the insurance benefits promised to him."

A TSAFF review of the Salinas case indicates that the TMLIRP adjuster simply issued a summary denial and did not review material pertinent to the claim, Riddle wrote. The denial also contains erroneous statements and should be reviewed by the administrator, as it appears that he neglected to review essential evidence in the case, he noted.

Studies show firefighters are at increased risk for developing kidney cancer and numerous other illnesses caused by repeated exposure to hazardous materials. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has cited the higher risks of kidney cancer for firefighters.

Riddle noted that Texas law covers the Salinas case. "Chapter 607 of the Texas Government Code ensures treatment of job-related illnesses," he said. "Sometimes known as the presumptive statute, this code was specifically created to help first responders like Mr. Salinas receive the medical treatment they have earned as they risked their own lives protecting others."

Mission firefighters also are proactively trying to detect job-related cancer. Through the Mission Professional Fire Fighters Association, IAFF Local 3609, they have personally paid for canine cancer detection tests. Riddle said, "There's no question that Mission firefighters are doing their part to address the cancer problem. Now, we hope the City of Mission will do more too – with the Salinas case and beyond."

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