

A Cautionary Tale from Firefighters of California

by Susan Foster

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The firefighters of California have a cautionary tale to share. They have spent 15 years and millions of dollars [fighting cell towers on their stations](#). They have done so because they know they are among the strongest of the strong when it comes to professionals among us. Yet they have suffered harm living and working in the presence of cell towers, and they know they cannot carry out their duties to protect the general public as they should if they are indeed impaired.

Furthermore, they know that those they protect are often more vulnerable than they are. Logic tells the firefighters, as it tells us, that if the strongest of the strong are harmed, the weakest and most vulnerable among us are at even greater risk. Firefighters go through rigorous physical and cognitive testing before being hired by any California fire department. So when cell towers placed on or adjacent to fire stations cause harm to the minds and bodies of our firefighters, something is obviously wrong. There is a lesson to be heeded. This is happening in California, and anecdotally, it is happening across the country. It is not happening at every station, but it is certainly happening at many stations where the cell tower radiation is beamed across the living quarters of the firefighters.

It is hard to believe that firefighters have become our society's "canaries in a coal mine", but that is exactly what I am about to describe to you.

As you read the results of a small pilot study, we conducted of California firefighters exposed to cell towers on their stations for five years, understand that this brain damage occurred to the strongest of the strong among us after a five-year exposure to 2G from a tower that was measured at 1/1000th of the FCC allowable limit of RF radiation. That was three generations of wireless ago, so the question must be asked: **What is going to happen to when 5G cell towers are built out in nearly every neighborhood, next to every school, daycare center, nursing home, hospital, place of work and place of worship – in other words, in every corner of our lives 24/7?**

In 2001 I was asked by San Diego, California firefighters to write an appeal when cell towers were permitted for their station. I began hearing more and more stories of firefighters who literally could not function in the job that establishes firefighters as the guardians of society. Once cell towers were activated on or adjacent to their stations, many firefighters could no longer function due to severe headache, inability to sleep, and foggy thinking. These are not symptoms we wish to see in our First Responders.

In 2004 I organized a SPECT brain scan pilot study of firefighters who had been exposed to a cell tower on their station for over five years. The study was conducted Gunnar Heuser, M.D., PhD. We found brain abnormalities in all six firefighters tested.

The symptoms experienced by the firefighters who participated in the SPECT brain scan study were similar to firefighters in other stations who live in the shadow of cell towers. Yet specific to the men we studied, it is important to note all the men had passed rigorous physical and cognitive exams prior to being hired by the fire department. Their symptoms included:

- headaches
- extreme fatigue
- cognitive impairment
- anesthesia-like sleep where the men woke up for 911 calls “as if they were drugged”
- inability to sleep
- depression
- anxiety
- unexplained anger
- immune-suppression manifest in frequent colds and flu-like symptoms

Real life examples of these symptoms are best briefly characterized by:

- Firefighters got lost on 911 calls in the town they grew up on several occasions.
- In one instance, four firefighters sat in the rig in a stupor with the alarm sounding in the background, unable to remember how to start the engine.
- A medic with 20 years of experience who had never made a mistake forgot basic CPR while resuscitating a coronary victim.

The brain scans of these six men revealed two things: Parts of the brain showed reduced blood flow known as hypoperfusion, suggesting compromised function in these particular areas. Other parts of the brain showed a pervasive, hyper-excitability of the neurons suggesting exposure to RF radiation was causing the neurons to continually fire in these areas without benefit of rest. When neurons (brain cells) cannot rest, they ultimately die.

Therefore, what is the risk going to be for every unborn baby, every child, every elderly person, everyone with a chronic illness, people with allergies and chemical sensitivities, as well as healthy women and men, when 4G or 5G towers beam untested millimeter waves 24/7 through the walls of homes into living rooms and second-story bedrooms where children sleep?

In an ironic twist, even though the firefighters become First Responders in order to protect and save our lives, there is nothing they can do to advocate for themselves. It is usually the fire chiefs who make the deals with telecom to site towers on fire station property, and firefighters who fight these towers outside union-sanctioned activities can lose their jobs. The chief gets credit for bringing in

revenue from cell tower leases, and along with that goes job security. Many chiefs are persuaded by unjustifiable promises of safety from telecom reps. Therefore, it falls to those of us in the public to become aware of when cell towers are permitted for fire stations and to speak up at the local level and advocate on behalf of the firefighters. And even though the rank-and-file firefighters and union members have advocated for us by fighting telecom where they can, we need to fight for ourselves. There are multiple ways to do this. There is an old saying that all politics are [local](#). Find like-minded people and educate yourselves and your community leaders through letters, films, and requests for town halls. Most local leaders are shocked to learn the telecommunications industry has not done any [safety studies](#) on 5G, yet this 4G/5G technology and infrastructure is still being forced upon municipalities and therefore upon all of us. Look at the successes from [other groups at the local](#) and state level. For example, in New Hampshire House Bill 522 created a Commission to investigate the environmental and human health impacts of 5G before it could be rolled out in the state. On November 1, 2020 the [NH Commission reported their findings with 15 recommendations](#). Fact-based letters of concern about the wireless buildout to legislators at every level – [local, state, and federal](#) – will add to a growing chorus from [scientists and physicians](#) around the world.

About Susan Foster

Susan Foster is a writer, medical social worker, US Adviser to the UK's EM Radiation Research Trust and Honorary Firefighter with the San Diego Fire Department. The last two decades she has advocated for firefighters who have been neurologically and immunologically harmed due to the presence of cell towers on their stations. In 2004 Foster organized a SPECT brain scan study of 6 California firefighters who had lived with a 2G cell tower on their station for 5 years. She conducted the study with Gunnar Heuser, MD, PhD. They found brain abnormalities in all 6 firefighters tested in this first-of-its-kind pilot study. Based on the study results, Foster was the original co-author of Resolution 15 calling for further study on fire stations across the US and Canada. This was passed at the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) in 2004. The same study helped spur Los Angeles firefighter & sheriff unions to join forces in 2015 and protest their stations being used as base stations for the powerful wireless FirstNET deployment. The study was also used as a basis for California firefighters fighting for the first-ever health exemption to 5G towers in AB 57 & SB 649 in California (2017/18). Foster's articles have appeared in *Glamour*, *Seventeen*, *Army Magazine*, *Catholic Digest*, *American Way*, *Woman's World*, *Your Health*, *Dynamic Years*, *Teenage*, *AAA World*, *The Health Professional*, *Radiation Research Trust*, *Citizens for Safe Technology* and *Children's Health Defense*. Susan Foster continues to advocate for firefighters in their efforts to

keep 5G towers off their stations and is currently writing a book on firefighters, the strongest of the strong among us, who have lost their health due to living and working in the shadow of cell towers. Foster holds a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan.