PF&R’s 2017-2020 Strategic Plan, aka The Coggle, is filled with hundreds of actions that will help position the bureau as a world-class agency that’s primed to protect the city’s people, property, and the environment.

Because most community members don’t have the time and inclination to read all of the actual Coggle items (you can find it online at www.portlandoregon.gov/fire/coggle), the strategic planning team led by Chief Myers created a campaign called Zero is Our Hero that synthesizes some of our most important action items. This brochure, with its mascot Nil, will have a public introduction a few months down the line, but we wanted to share it with all employees now. See the sidebar for more information about Zero is Our Hero.

There are four areas highlighted in this campaign, including Zero Firefighter Casualties. Zero Firefighter Casualties includes things ranging from fire ground injuries and deaths to overall health and wellness. One specific area that receives strong focus on the Coggle is Zero Fire-Related Cancers.

In 2015, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the final results of what is currently the largest study of cancer risk among career firefighters ever conducted in the United States. This study of about 30,000 firefighters over a 60-year span showed that compared with the general population, firefighters on average are at higher risk for certain kinds of cancer — mainly oral, digestive, respiratory, genital and urinary cancers.

The CDC also found that firefighters who were exposed to more fires than their peers experienced more instances of lung cancer and leukemia. The risks come on many fronts: Fires carry soot and smoke from high-toxin synthetic material and electronics; exhaust fumes from diesel fire engines present a hazard; the protective gear that insulates firefighters from heat and flames also raises body temperatures, opening pores to absorb chemicals.

Chief Myers supports a strong cancer reduction program at PF&R; in July he will be attending an NFPA workshop titled “Campaign for Fire Service Contamination Control” that will work to develop an educational campaign on the topic.

"Firefighters know that they are putting their lives on the line every day that they show up for work, but the risks we take should always be carefully analyzed. If there are ways to reduce cancer risks, we are going to implement them,” says Chief Myers. “My role as fire chief is to make sure that the men and women on our front lines go home to their families and remain healthy.”

Some of the Zero Fire-Related Cancers Action Items on the Coggle Include:

- Research and develop “Ward Diesel No Smoke” ventilation solutions for apparatus
- Purchase and install extractors for cleaning turnouts in 2 locations
- Implement twice a year turnout cleaning per NFPA guidelines
- Purchase second set of turnouts
- Convert all station cleaners to non-toxic
- Ensure 100% of stations are below action level for radon
- Test water for lead in fire stations

See the whole brochure at: www.portlandoregon.gov/fire/ZeroHero

Do you have a story about a PF&R cogglevation that would be great for this newsletter? Contact Caryn Brooks on the Communications Team at caryn.brooks@portlandoregon.gov or 503-823-3714