



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
JIMMY PATRONIS
STATE OF FLORIDA

December 3, 2020

Director Robert R. Redfield, MD
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30329

Dear Dr. Redfield:

I am Florida's Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal Jimmy Patronis and I am writing with great urgency in requesting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revisit its exclusion of firefighters as health care personnel within the recently published Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) guidance document. The CDC's decision to exclude firefighters as health care personnel puts the health and safety of our front-line heroes – and their families – at risk. Moreover, as our firefighters respond to many COVID-19 cases, the CDC's error will hurt our overall ability to save lives and fight the virus.


Frankly, treating our heroes as though all they do is shoot water from a truck demonstrates an incredible lack of understanding of what is expected of today's professional firefighter. Of the over 38,000 career firefighters in Florida, 90 percent are paramedic or EMT certified.

Florida's firefighters are involved at all levels of life support: they're at the scene of emergencies, they're in the homes, and they're facilitating the transportation of COVID-19 positive patients. In many cases they do not have the benefit of operating in properly prepared or well-sanitized environments. Unfortunately, some of our smaller firehouses may lack the appropriate personal protective equipment needed to protect themselves from the virus. Florida's firefighters respond to long-term care facilities, rehab centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, shelters, and other facilities that put them at greater risk of exposure. In other cases, our firefighters are responding to non-medical emergency calls, such as gas leaks, where they can contract the COVID-19 virus from individuals who are asymptomatic.

In certain instances, entire firehouses in Florida have had to shut down in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus, and when a firehouse goes down it becomes that much more difficult to get critical lifesaving support to those who need it most in their time of need. Because so much of our nation relies on the CDC's guidance in dealing with the coronavirus, the reclassification of firefighters as health care personnel needs to happen before entire distribution channels are created for vaccine disbursements. If you want to save lives, let's fix this classification error and ensure we're getting these vaccines to the right people as quickly as possible.

To discuss further, please contact my office at 850-413-4900.

Sincerely,


Jimmy Patronis
Chief Financial Officer