

# Enrolled House Bill 2915

Sponsored by Representatives GRAYBER, SOLLMAN, Senator WAGNER; Representatives CAMPOS, DEXTER, HAYDEN, HOLVEY, HUDSON, NOSSE, POWER, PRUSAK, REYNOLDS, SANCHEZ, SMITH WARNER, WILLIAMS, Senators KENNEMER, LIEBER, PATTERSON (Pre-session filed.)

CHAPTER .....

## AN ACT

Relating to workers' compensation for occupational diseases that certain workers suffer; creating new provisions; amending ORS 656.802; and declaring an emergency.

**Be It Enacted by the People of the State of Oregon:**

**SECTION 1.** ORS 656.802 is amended to read:

656.802. (1)(a) As used in this chapter, "occupational disease" means any disease or infection arising out of and in the course of employment caused by substances or activities to which an employee is not ordinarily subjected or exposed other than during a period of regular actual employment therein, and which requires medical services or results in disability or death, including:

(A) Any disease or infection caused by ingestion of, absorption of, inhalation of or contact with dust, fumes, vapors, gases, radiation or other substances.

(B) Any mental disorder, whether sudden or gradual in onset, which requires medical services or results in physical or mental disability or death.

(C) Any series of traumatic events or occurrences which requires medical services or results in physical disability or death.

(b) As used in this chapter, "mental disorder" includes any physical disorder caused or worsened by mental stress.

(2)(a) The worker must prove that employment conditions were the major contributing cause of the disease.

(b) If the occupational disease claim is based on the worsening of a preexisting disease or condition pursuant to ORS 656.005 (7), the worker must prove that employment conditions were the major contributing cause of the combined condition and pathological worsening of the disease.

(c) Occupational diseases shall be subject to all of the same limitations and exclusions as accidental injuries under ORS 656.005 (7).

(d) Existence of an occupational disease or worsening of a preexisting disease must be established by medical evidence supported by objective findings.

(e) Preexisting conditions shall be deemed causes in determining major contributing cause under this section.

(3) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a mental disorder is not compensable under this chapter unless the worker establishes all of the following:

(a) The employment conditions producing the mental disorder exist in a real and objective sense.

(b) The employment conditions producing the mental disorder are conditions other than conditions generally inherent in every working situation or reasonable disciplinary, corrective or job performance evaluation actions by the employer, or cessation of employment or employment decisions attendant upon ordinary business or financial cycles.

(c) There is a diagnosis of a mental or emotional disorder which is generally recognized in the medical or psychological community.

(d) There is clear and convincing evidence that the mental disorder arose out of and in the course of employment.

(4)(a) Death, disability or impairment of health of firefighters of any political division who have completed five or more years of employment as firefighters, caused by any disease of the lungs or respiratory tract, hypertension or cardiovascular-renal disease, and resulting from their employment as firefighters is an "occupational disease." Any condition or impairment of health arising under this subsection shall be presumed to result from a firefighter's employment. However, any such firefighter must have taken a physical examination upon becoming a firefighter, or subsequently thereto, which failed to reveal any evidence of such condition or impairment of health which pre-existed employment. Denial of a claim for any condition or impairment of health arising under this subsection must be on the basis of clear and convincing medical evidence that the cause of the condition or impairment is unrelated to the firefighter's employment.

**(b) Notwithstanding ORS 656.027 (6), a city that provides a disability or retirement system for firefighters by ordinance or charter that is not subject to this chapter, when accepting and processing claims for death, disability or impairment of health from firefighters covered by the disability or retirement system, shall apply:**

**(A) The provisions of this subsection; and**

**(B) For claims filed under this subsection, the time limitations for filing claims that are set forth in ORS 656.807 (1) and (2).**

(5)(a) Death, disability or impairment of health of a nonvolunteer firefighter employed by a political division or subdivision who has completed five or more years of employment as a nonvolunteer firefighter is an occupational disease if the death, disability or impairment of health:

(A) Is caused by brain cancer, colon cancer, stomach cancer, testicular cancer, prostate cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, cancer of the throat or mouth, rectal cancer, breast cancer or leukemia;

(B) Results from the firefighter's employment as a nonvolunteer firefighter; and

(C) Is first diagnosed by a physician after July 1, 2009.

(b) Any condition or impairment of health arising under this subsection is presumed to result from the firefighter's employment. Denial of a claim for any condition or impairment of health arising under this subsection must be on the basis of clear and convincing medical evidence that the condition or impairment was not caused or contributed to in material part by the firefighter's employment.

(c) Notwithstanding paragraph (b) of this subsection, the presumption established under paragraph (b) of this subsection may be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence that the use of tobacco by the nonvolunteer firefighter is the major contributing cause of the cancer.

(d) The presumption established under paragraph (b) of this subsection does not apply to prostate cancer if the cancer is first diagnosed by a physician after the firefighter has reached the age of 55. However, nothing in this paragraph affects the right of a firefighter to establish the compensability of prostate cancer without benefit of the presumption.

(e) The presumption established under paragraph (b) of this subsection does not apply to claims filed more than 84 months following the termination of the nonvolunteer firefighter's employment as a nonvolunteer firefighter. However, nothing in this paragraph affects the right of a firefighter to establish the compensability of the cancer without benefit of the presumption.

(f) The presumption established under paragraph (b) of this subsection does not apply to volunteer firefighters.

(g) Nothing in this subsection affects the provisions of subsection (4) of this section.

(h) For purposes of this subsection, “nonvolunteer firefighter” means a firefighter who performs firefighting services and receives salary, hourly wages equal to or greater than the state minimum wage, or other compensation except for room, board, lodging, housing, meals, stipends, reimbursement for expenses or nominal payments for time and travel, regardless of whether any such compensation is subject to federal, state or local taxation. “Nominal payments for time and travel” includes, but is not limited to, payments for on-call time or time spent responding to a call or similar noncash benefits.

(6) Notwithstanding ORS 656.027 (6), any city providing a disability and retirement system by ordinance or charter for firefighters and police officers not subject to this chapter shall apply the presumptions established under subsection (5) of this section when processing claims for firefighters covered by the system.

(7)(a) As used in this subsection:

(A) “Acute stress disorder” has the meaning given that term in the DSM-5.

(B) “Covered employee” means an individual who, on the date a claim is filed under this chapter:

(i) Was employed for at least five years by, or experienced a single traumatic event that satisfies the criteria set forth in the DSM-5 as Criterion A for diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder while employed by, the state, a political subdivision of the state, a special government body, as defined in ORS 174.117, or a public agency in any of these occupations:

(I) A full-time paid firefighter;

(II) A full-time paid emergency medical services provider;

(III) A full-time paid police officer;

(IV) A full-time paid corrections officer or youth correction officer;

(V) A full-time paid parole and probation officer; or

(VI) A full-time paid emergency dispatcher or 9-1-1 emergency operator; and

(ii) Remains employed in an occupation listed in sub-subparagraph (i) of this subparagraph or separated from employment in the occupation not more than seven years previously.

(C) “DSM-5” means the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association.

(D) “Post-traumatic stress disorder” has the meaning given that term in the DSM-5.

(E) “Psychiatrist” means a psychiatrist whom the Oregon Medical Board has licensed and certified as eligible to diagnose the conditions described in this subsection.

(F) “Psychologist” means a licensed psychologist, as defined in ORS 675.010, whom the Oregon Board of Psychology has certified as eligible to diagnose the conditions described in this subsection.

(b) Notwithstanding subsections (2) and (3) of this section, if a covered employee establishes through a preponderance of persuasive medical evidence from a psychiatrist or psychologist that the covered employee has more likely than not satisfied the diagnostic criteria in the DSM-5 for post-traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder, any resulting death, disability or impairment of health of the covered employee shall be presumed to be compensable as an occupational disease. An insurer or self-insured employer may rebut the presumption only by establishing through clear and convincing medical evidence that duties as a covered employee were not of real importance or great consequence in causing the diagnosed condition.

(c) An insurer’s or self-insured employer’s acceptance of a claim of post-traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder under this subsection, whether the acceptance was voluntary or was a result of a judgment or order, does not preclude the insurer or the self-insured employer from later denying the current compensability of the claim if exposure as a covered employee to trauma that meets the diagnostic criteria set forth as Criterion A in the DSM-5 for post-traumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder ceases being of real importance or great consequence in causing the disability, impairment of health or a need for treatment.

(d) An insurer or self-insured employer may deny a claim under paragraph (c) of this subsection only on the basis of clear and convincing medical evidence.

(e) Notwithstanding ORS 656.027 (6), a city that provides a disability or retirement system for firefighters and police officers by ordinance or charter that is not subject to this chapter, when

accepting and processing claims for death, disability or impairment of health from firefighters and police officers covered by the disability or retirement system, shall apply:

(A) The provisions of this subsection; and

(B) For claims filed under this subsection, the time limitations for filing claims that are set forth in ORS 656.807 (1) and (2).

**SECTION 2. The amendments to ORS 656.802 by section 1 of this 2021 Act apply to claims made on or after the effective date of this 2021 Act.**

**SECTION 3. This 2021 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2021 Act takes effect on its passage.**

**Passed by House April 5, 2021**

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Timothy G. Sekerak, Chief Clerk of House

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Tina Kotek, Speaker of House

**Passed by Senate May 24, 2021**

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Peter Courtney, President of Senate

**Received by Governor:**

.....M,....., 2021

**Approved:**

.....M,....., 2021

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Kate Brown, Governor

**Filed in Office of Secretary of State:**

.....M,....., 2021

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Shemia Fagan, Secretary of State