

## From Chief Tom Wutz, Fire Services Bureau, NYS OFPC

All,

**These gloves were on State Contract.**

### **FDNY TO REPLACE FAULTY GLOVES FOLLOWING INJURIES-MFG CHANGED MATERIALS**

Friday, February 4, 2011 The New York City Fire Department has determined that the relatively new fire-retardant Glove Corp "Blaze Fighter" gloves they issue have a critical flaw: they do not adequately protect firefighters from burns. Since November, six firefighters have suffered second-degree burns on the backs of their hands fighting four house fires around the city, fire officials said. All were wearing the new Blaze Fighter model of gloves; in each instance, the gloves themselves were not damaged. **Compounding the issue is that this week, "The Glove Corp" has gone out of business, this, after they had changed the materials used for the gloves to a non-compliant material.**

The FDNY is quickly moving to replace the gloves, made by the Glove Corp. They are now being worn by 6,500 firefighters in the 11,500-member force, at a total cost of about \$850,000. The first sign of trouble came on Nov. 14, when three men on a hose line at a house fire in Brooklyn suffered second-degree burns to the backs of their hands. "The largest is the size of a quarter," said James Long, a Fire Department spokesman. "It was blisters on the back of the hands, and on the fingers."

Three days later, a firefighter on a Brooklyn rooftop was burned in a similar fashion. On Dec. 25, a fifth firefighter suffered the same burns; on Jan. 23, a sixth, in the Bronx, was burned. The department bought the gloves in September, after a successful trial run. Officials at the time hailed them for their state-of-the-art design and tapered fit; they met National Fire Protection Association standards. But after the series of injuries, officials from the department's safety command began an inquiry, using an "independent, outside expert" to determine if the physical make-up of the gloves had been a factor, Chief of Department Edward S. Kilduff said.

**The analysis revealed that the manufacturer had changed one of the materials used in the gloves. The change from a cotton fiber to a polyester blend made the gloves noncompliant with the national safety standards, Chief Kilduff said.**

The Glove Corp put out an advisory last month noting that the Blaze Fighter model had "encountered issues with the performance of the conductive heat resistance test," adding that the company had received "reported cases of back of hand burns with a few pairs of this glove model."

The Fire Department decided in 2009 to phase out the gloves that it had used for a decade. The Blaze Fighter model was chosen, mostly because firefighters liked them during a test phase. A Fire Department press release last year offered an endorsement from Firefighter Aaron Buch, of Rescue Company 1, who described being able to feel his "call button" through his glove to issue a Mayday after falling through a floor at a fire in Chinatown.

The Fire Department has referred the matter to the city's Law Department, said Gail Rubin, the chief of the city Law Department's affirmative litigation division.

The Glove Corp's Web site does not list any of its clients, and telephone calls to its general manager were not returned. A woman who answered the phone said the company had closed as of Jan. 31, though she could provide no details. The closing of the company could complicate the city's efforts to recoup costs.

But possible legal or economic battles, aside, Chief Kilduff said, "The most important part of it, in our mind, is we need to get these gloves replaced as soon as possible."

The department has put its unions on notice about the problems and on Thursday evening sent a "department order" to every firehouse letting rank and file members know of the plans to get other gloves in place, soon.

"We understand we have to act as quickly as possible," Chief Kilduff said. "One injury is one too many."

Alain Delaqu erie contributed reporting.

