

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bodi.Me Research Reveals Life-Threatening Risks of Ill-Fitting PPE for Female Firefighters

Pioneering research highlights urgent need for gender-specific fire service uniforms, with digital sizing solutions offering an immediate path to improved safety and performance.



London, United Kingdom (August 2025) – The firefighting profession demands split-second decisions, physical agility, and unwavering safety; yet, for tens of thousands* of female firefighters across the United States, their protective gear is working against them. New research from [Bodi.Me](https://www.bodi.me), a leader in innovative Sustainable Fashion Fit Technology, reveal alarming mismatches between the standard male-based PPE sizing used in fire departments and the actual body measurements of female firefighters.

In the United States alone, nearly 90,000 women serve in fire departments. Bodi.Me’s research, conducted earlier this year at the UK’s National Fire Chief Council, measured a representative sample of female firefighters and compared their actual dimensions with standard PPE sizing charts. The results point to a systemic problem:

- Seventy-five percent had hips wider than their chest, a measurement not accounted for in most male-based sizing.

- Fifty-five percent required different size categories for chest and waist, making off-the-shelf gear a poor fit.
- Standard charts link height and girth, meaning a shorter firefighter with a larger build has no suitable ready-made option.

This matters because improperly fitted PPE is not just uncomfortable, it's dangerous. The research found that poor fit can reduce thermal protection by up to forty percent, increasing the risk of severe burns even when PPE meets compliance standards. Ill-fitting coats create gaps at critical points like the neck, wrists, and ankles, allowing hazardous chemicals and particulates such as PAHs and PFAS to enter, raising long-term health risks. Additionally, gear that doesn't fit properly can hinder mobility, increasing the chances of trips, falls, and equipment snags during vital operations. Poor fit can also compromise the performance of essential equipment, including SCBA mask seals, jeopardizing firefighter safety when it matters most.



While the ultimate solution lies in manufacturing PPE based on female-specific patterns, immediate improvements are possible. Bodi.Me's [Size-Me digital fitting tool](#) allows departments to match each firefighter quickly and accurately with their correct PPE size across all gear items. Using just a few basic measurements, the tool generates a 3D avatar, enabling both the wearer and the supplier to identify the safest, most comfortable fit.

“When female firefighters are issued PPE that doesn't fit, their safety and performance are put at risk. Our Size-Me tool gives fire departments an immediate way to fix that using just a few simple measurements to create a 3D avatar and recommend the correct size for each item of gear. This ensures every firefighter gets protected as they should, moves with them, and eliminates dangerous gaps. Proper fit is not a luxury; it's a matter of survival,” said Lara Mazzoni, CEO of Bodi.Me.

By helping manufacturers better plan stock and reduce overproduction, Size-Me also addresses cost concerns, a common barrier to producing female-specific PPE at scale. Bodi.Me's research underscores the urgent need for more size and fit data, alongside direct feedback from female firefighters, to ensure PPE is designed for every body type in the service.

To learn more about Bodi.Me, visit www.bodi.me. For more information on Bodi.Me's PPE fit research, visit the bodi.me/blog.

Fill out a [form](#) to arrange a demo of the Size-Me solution. Follow Bodi.Me on [Instagram](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

About Bodi.Me:

Bodi.Me is a UK-based SaaS company founded in 2013 by Lara Mazzoni and partners. In 2014 launched the first Size and Fit recommendation software, with the mission to help solve the garment industry's fit problem and promote better sustainability within the industry. Helping wearers select the best fit through fast and accurate size recommendation tools can reduce returns, optimize stock levels, and help businesses focus production on the sizes that sell.

Bodi.Me has been a pioneer in clothing size and fit optimization since 2014 with a (but not exclusive) focus on workwear and uniforms.

Bodi.Me's Size-Me tool integrates with customer systems and matches wearers to the right size garment from the customer's range via Bodi.Me's AI and proprietary technology. From just a handful of basic measurements, Size-Me extrapolates a complete body profile to provide instant size recommendations personalized to each wearer. Size-Me is uniquely customizable and adapts to each customer's needs.

Source*

Official Statistics (Based on NFPA's 2020 U.S. Fire Department Profile)

- **Total firefighters** (career + volunteer): approximately **1,041,200** <https://www.womeninfire.org/>
- **Female firefighters overall**: about **89,600**, representing roughly **9%** of the total firefighting workforce <https://www.womeninfire.org/>
- **Career (professional) female firefighters**: approximately **17,200**, making up **5%** of all career firefighters (npr.brightspotcdn.com)
- **Volunteer female firefighters**: approximately **72,400**, representing **11%** of all volunteer firefighters (npr.brightspotcdn.com)
- **England shows steady progress**, with women now making up **9.3% of firefighters**—a notable increase from **6.4% just five years ago** Gov.UK
- The **UK-wide survey** places female firefighter representation at around **10%**, though it's based on broader personnel data and may include roles beyond operational firefighters [Local Government Association](#).