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City trying to guard firefighters against infectious diseases
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OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

WINTER PARK — The city is spending \$5,800 to help protect firefighters from infectious diseases they may encounter in the line of duty. Louis Salado, who trains paramedics for the fire department, said firefighters are concerned because Hepatitis B cases have increased in Orange County. That disease can be caught through contact with infected blood or body fluids. Some firefighters have had to be treated because

of exposure to Hepatitis B patients, Salado said. The illness is characterized by weakness, abdominal discomfort, a rash and maybe jaundice and a fever, he said. A person who catches the disease may be unable to work for up to a year. In acute cases it can be fatal.

The city has contracted with Winter Park Memorial Hospital to give the 44-member fire department information about the disease and prevention tips.

Firefighters will be screened for the illness and if they want, they can get a series of three shots to protect them from it. They also will be tested for tuberculosis.

Salado said he knows of no Winter Park firefighter who has had either disease.

The hospital will conduct seminars Tuesday through June 4 and begin testing and inoculations later next month, he said.

He said the department continues to emphasize educating firefighters about the deadly acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus. He said during training sessions he has shown several informational videos and distributed booklets on AIDS. Firefighters wear gloves when aiding victims at accident scenes when blood or other body fluids are present.

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