Sample Drop-In Article for Fire/EMS Newsletter

Recognizing Suicide Prevention Week 2019 (Sept 8-14)

*Finding Purpose: Taking care of ourselves and others*

This year, from September 8th-14th, communities across the nation will be coming together to recognize Suicide Prevention Week 2019. We as first responders play a key role in preventing suicide in our community, from recognizing risk, to responding to individuals in distress, providing care and referring to appropriate resources.

Unfortunately, we are so used to helping others, that we often neglect to take care of ourselves. “[Fit for Duty](https://www.firstrespondercenter.org/behavioral-health/)” goes beyond our physical fitness and it’s equally important for us to take care of our mental fitness.

We know that a career in emergency services is one the most stressful occupations in the world. Our work as first responders may result in chronic negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, or depression, which can eventually lead to psychological burnout and emotional exhaustion The simple nature of “shift work” feeds issues around sleep disturbance and puts strains on our family and social connections. In addition to the operational stressors inherent in our work, studies have shown that factors related to organizational structure and climate can be an even greater source of stress for first responders.

The traumatic incidents that we see every day, the ones we “shrug off” and try to pretend don’t impact us, mount up over time and take a toll on our psyche. It would be naïve to think they don’t. Aside from the intensity of the acute stress experienced in the moment, the feelings that we carry with us after such emotionally charged incidents represent a more enduring source of stress. The physiological strain of suppressing these incidents can have a negative impact on our physical health over time as well.

Courage is not found in covering up these traumas, but is found is acknowledging it, seeking help, so that we are stronger and more prepared for the next emergency. In a word, resiliency. What are we doing to maintain resiliency through our career? Studies show that resilience training can be extremely effective if repeated over time.

It is vital that we take care of ourselves, and just as essential that we take care of each other.

We need to remain vigilant and look for signs of distress in our colleagues, our brothers and sisters. We need to dispel the myth that to be a “good firefighter” you need to be able to shut it down and push it all aside, and establish that it would be abnormal if you weren’t impacted on some level by the traumas we see and the stressors of the job.

Please pay attention to those around you, pay attention to how they are acting and what is going on in their lives. Stay vigilant with your own feelings, and how you are responding to the stressors of the job. Most importantly, be aware of the resources and be courageous in seeking help when needed.

* **Safe Call Now**:
  + Call **206-459-3020**
  + <http://www.safecallnowusa.org/>
  + Safe Call Now is a confidential, comprehensive, 24-hour crisis referral service for all public safety employees, all emergency services personnel, and their family members nationwide
* For more information on warning signs, risk factors, and how to talk to someone you are worried about, visit: [www.SuicideIsPreventable.org](http://www.SuicideIsPreventable.org)