



A Commitment to Firefighter Behavioral Health

Firefighters are asked to face trials that few outside the profession can imagine – from horrific disasters such as catastrophic fires and mass shootings to everyday horrors such as fatal accidents and children sometimes dying in their arms.

No matter how tough, no one is immune to the anguish that can build from a career of difficult calls. We know that roughly one-fifth of our firefighters are victims of post-traumatic stress injury. Suicide is approaching epidemic proportions. Stress-related alcohol and substance abuse is well above average. Broken marriages, panic attacks, depression and family traumas are increasingly commonplace.

As we know, our firefighters often suffer in silence, burying the wrenching emotional impact of these traumatic experiences. The fear of losing their jobs, being labeled as unfit for duty, or being seen as weak are concerns that keep many from opening up. As a profession, we have a responsibility to take a stand for our employees, our members and our communities.

On behalf of a united fire service, the California Firefighter Behavioral Health Task Force is asking management and labor to come together and pledge their commitment to addressing this issue together. We, the undersigned, mutually agree to:

- Work together to break the stigma – the cultural and professional concerns -- that creates barriers to behavioral health for our brothers and sisters;
- Use the best resources available to us to secure services and support for our firefighter brothers and sisters to address mental and emotional injuries and their effects;
- Receive, and provide, regular communication about behavioral health issues and services and peer support available to help build understanding and best practices.

The California Firefighter Behavioral Health Task Force has committed to provide outreach and support material to aid in the important process of normalizing the issue. The Task Force is also committed to a collaborative effort to develop practices and strategies aimed at making it possible for us to effectively address these issues together.

Working together on this critical health and safety issue is vital to the future of our profession, our communities and, most specifically, to the men and women of our department.

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