



HEALING OUR OWN

DISCUSSION TOPICS FOR SUICIDE SAFETY STAND DOWN

FIREFIGHTER STATISTICS

- Being a firefighter is ranked as the second most stressful occupation – only combat soldiers endure more stress.
- Fire service personnel are four times more likely to die of suicide than a traditional line-of-duty death in any given year.
- National surveys suggest nearly one in three firefighters has considered suicide.
- In the last four months, three California firefighters died by their own hand.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS – HOW TO KNOW IF SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING?

Since firefighters spend long shifts together – either on the lines or in the station – we have a special view of each other. It's our duty to look out for one another just as we would on the front lines. Here are some common signs and symptoms of someone who may be struggling:

- Increasing alcohol or substance use
- Changes in energy levels – restlessness, irritability, insomnia or sleeping too much
- Withdrawing or isolating from others
- Displaying extreme mood swings
- Partaking in reckless behavior
- Changes in eating habits such as overeating or a loss of appetite
- Inability to concentrate, memory recall issues or the inability to think clearly
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness
- Worrying about being a burden to others

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING

If one of your fellow firefighters went down in the middle of an active fire, you'd go in to get them out, right? So why not help get them get out of an emotional injury?

It starts with awareness. If you see the warning signs of a brother or sister in distress, letting it go shouldn't be an option.

BE DIRECT: Be proactive and approach someone when you've seen them exhibiting some of the warning signs or appear to be in crisis.

LISTEN: Practice active listening techniques and let them talk without judgment; if it appears they are in crisis, do not leave them alone.

GET THEM HELP: Don't be afraid to get your brother or sister the help they might need. If you are not a trained peer, find one that they can speak with; or if you think this may be above what a peer can offer, get them professional help. HealingOurOwn.org/gettinghelp has clinical resources that you can contact.

BE THERE: Everyone deals with pain differently. Be there for your injured colleague, supporting their recovery just as you would if a brother or sister went down with an injury in a fire.

Remember: If someone is in crisis or seems at risk of suicide, don't leave them alone.



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CHANGING THE CULTURE IN THE FIREHOUSE

Firefighters' coping methods after a heartbreaking or difficult call can vary from brushing it off through humor, to denial and alcohol or drug abuse.

Consider the following:

- Firefighters feel most comfortable talking with their peers – individuals who share their experiences. That makes the firehouse the perfect place to engage in injury prevention.
- If someone opens up at the kitchen table about a bad call or a difficult experience, don't shut them down. Help them down and don't be afraid to relate your own experiences and concerns.
- Knowing that they're not alone can be the best thing for a brother or sister at risk.

If you are conducting these meetings, don't forget to add personal stories. You can find personal stories at HealingOurOwn.org/stories.

RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE

If someone you know is in crisis, it's important to know how they can find help. Below are available resources:

- **PEER SUPPORT**
Find out your department's peer support resources and how to access them
- **PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING**
HealingOurOwn.org/gettinghelp has a list of professional counselors recommended by first responders
- **NATIONAL SUICIDE LIFELINE (24/7)**
1 (800) 273-8255 (the number is also on your wallet card)
- **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PTSD**
HealingOurOwn.org