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First Responder Suicide and Mental Health

We are helpers. While this line of work is profoundly rewarding and provides invaluable services to communities, it also comes with an unavoidable high exposure to danger and trauma, leading to possible mental health issues and even suicidal ideation for EMTs and paramedics.

First responders report significantly higher rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, sleep disorders, fatigue, and suicide. These mental struggles stem from routine exposure to suffering and death, the unpredictable nature of the job, and being in situations that jeopardize your own health and safety. The work is mentally taxing, requiring a high degree of focus and composure in high-stress situations. On top of this, the shift-work pattern can disrupt your bodies' circadian rhythm and cause sleep difficulties, further exacerbating stress levels.

Because this work can be physically and emotionally exhausting, it is important to find ways to cope with the regular exposure to stress and trauma. While there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach for supporting EMS mental health, there are several strategies you can try to help decrease your stress.

- **Talk About It** – Talking about your on-the-job experiences can be therapeutic and important for mentally digesting difficult days. Connecting with your peers and sharing the emotional aftermath of a challenging call can be a lifeline for coping with job-related stress.
- **Maintain a Balanced Lifestyle** – Traumatic events and dangerous situations affect

you mentally and physically, so trying to maintain a work/life balance is necessary. Developing hobbies and finding constructive ways to unwind at the end of a shift helps to keep your work in perspective.

- **Focus on Physical Health** - Eating a balanced diet, getting adequate sleep, and exercising regularly are vital to first responder longevity. Maintaining physical health is valuable for reducing the effects stress has on your body.
- **Keep a Journal** - Recording your thoughts on paper can help to process traumas and tragedies, particularly if talking about troubling events feels too difficult.
- **Daily Self-Care Practices** - Take care of your emotional and spiritual needs by setting aside quiet time to read a book, meditate, take a relaxing bath, watch the sunset, pray, or spend time in nature.

(Adapted from: <https://fherehab.com/learning/emt-paramedic-mental-health-care>)



First Responder Resources

Hotlines

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 24/7
988 (talk or text)
1.800.273.8255

Code 9 Project 24/7
1.844.467.3247

CopLine 24/7
1.800.267.5463

Safe Call Now 24/7
Resource Referral Service
1.206.459.3020

Websites

National Alliance on Mental Illness
<https://www.nami.org/>

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
<https://988lifeline.org/>

Man Therapy
<https://mantherapy.org/>

Reviving Responders (EMS-specific)
<https://www.revivingresponders.com/>

Share the Load (EMS/Fire)
<https://www.nvfc.org/programs/share-the-load-program/>

Apps

CrewCare
<https://www.crewcarelife.com/>

SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS FOR Adults

Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased, and if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change

- Talking about or making plans for suicide.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

#SUICIDEPREVENTIONMONTH | #SPM24

SAMHSA

Do Something Different

Feeling atypically or easily frustrated, upset, or emotionally raw? Use the HALT method to identify underlying physical and emotional factors and rebalance!

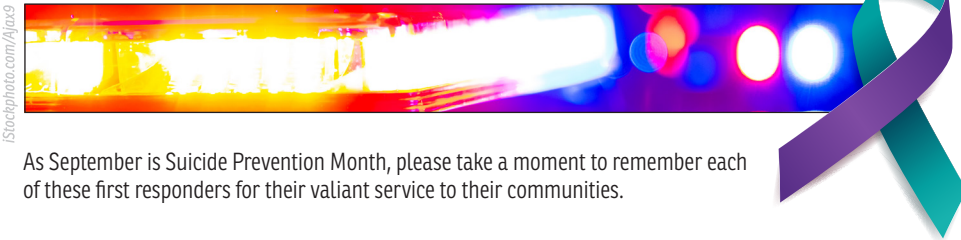
- H** – Are you Hungry? Well-balanced meals and snacks quell your appetite and provide nutritional building blocks for your brain and body.
- A** – Are you Angry? Healthy coping skills improve emotional and cognitive control, especially in high-stress situations.
- L** – Are you Lonely? Build strong connections with positive, influential people with whom you share common interests.
- T** – Are you Tired? Lack of sleep and sleep disorders can worsen psychological and mental health conditions –



maintain good sleep hygiene habits as prevention.

iStockphoto.com/spaxiax

By the Numbers: First Responder Suicides



As September is Suicide Prevention Month, please take a moment to remember each of these first responders for their valiant service to their communities.

Confirmed First Responder Suicides

Year	EMT/Paramedic	Firefighter	Law Enforcement	Corrections	Dispatcher
2024	8	55	59	2	0
2023	22	81	122	10	4
2022	12	82	173	12	2
2021	16	94	149	22	0
2020	28	104	150	35	1
2019	22	130	198	39	0
2018	24	95	157	30	2
2017	19	108	Data NA	Data NA	1
2016	39	123	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2015	37	123	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2014	33	99	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2013	9	73	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2012	11	82	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2011	5	55	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2010	3	52	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2009	7	40	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2008	3	48	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2007	2	28	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2006	3	26	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2005	1	18	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2004	0	19	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2003	1	18	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2002	3	14	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2001	1	13	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA
2000	0	16	Data NA	Data NA	Data NA

(Data from: <https://www.ffbba.org/ff-emergency-suicide-deaths-by-year-type/> and <https://bluehelix.org/the-numbers/>)

SEPTEMBER AWARENESS

- Suicide Prevention Month (TEAL AND PURPLE STRIPE)
- Firefighter Appreciation Month (THIN RED LINE)
- National Preparedness Month
- 5: International Day of Charity
- 10: World Suicide Prevention Day (TEAL AND PURPLE STRIPE)
- 12: National Policewoman Day
- 18-24: National Security Officer Week (THIN PURPLE LINE)
- 21: National Thank a Police Officer Day
- 21: International Day of Peace
- 26: National Law Enforcement Suicide Awareness Day

SEPTEMBER COMMUNITY EVENTS

- 7: Wasco Rose Festival (Wasco)
- 7: Village Fest
- 7: September Craft and Vendor Fair @ Villas at Scenic River
- 7: 3rd Annual Mariachi Festival @ Fox Theatre
- 7: Flagship Romance @ Fiddler's Crossing (Tehachapi)
- 14: Kern Cancer Run/Walk and Festival @ The Park at Riverwalk
- 14: Celtic Thunder @ Fox Theatre
- 14: Great Kern River Cleanup (Keyesville)
- 18-29: Kern County Fair @ KC Fairgrounds
- 21: Walk Like MADD/MADD Dash 5K @ The Park at Riverwalk
- 27: Swan Lake @ Fox Theatre
- 28: Thunder on the Mountain Car and Motorcycle Show (Tehachapi)

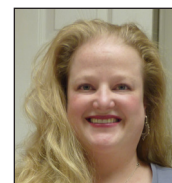
The HR Spot

There are several resources that are free of charge to you and your family members: Shielding the Frontline Support Hotline- 661-621-2845

Claremont EAP-800-834-3773

Sunny Mueller-See contact below...

And lastly you can reach out to HR if you are not sure where to start and get help. We are here to support you.



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WellNow is published monthly for Hall Ambulance employees and their families.

Never forget: You are not alone, and you do not have to struggle by yourself. There is help...and hope.