

Congratulations to the 2023 Manno Outstanding Research Award Winner



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Exploring the Role of Psychological Safety and Trust in the Lived Experiences of Women in the Fire Service

Results — Key lessons

- Psychological safety is shown to be a significant element of workplace efficacy and enabling performance and cohesive teams. The results of this study are consistent with this important emergent research in workplace effectiveness.
- This study reinforces claims that leadership plays a pivotal role in the retention of women in the profession. Fire service leadership must be vigilant in identifying and mitigating issues associated with gender disparity, discrimination, and harassment. Using the Critical Incident Technique, a methodology that is well-validated in studies that examine workplace relationships and organizational effectiveness, this study directly gathered information from women in fire service careers to better understand the ways in which we can support the retention of women in these careers.
- Findings suggest that the participants in this sample intended to remain in fire service careers despite significant barriers and a lack of equal access to promotional opportunities. Major factors contributing to their intention to remain included endurance and trusted leadership-centered work groups.
- Leadership actions which drew the most frequent attention from participants included both effective hearing and listening. The ability of an officer to stop and listen to what their subordinate is saying, to engage in conversations with empathy, and a leaders' willingness to acknowledge ownership of the issues were among the most meaningful actions cited. Study results also suggested that trust in leadership, specifically the first-line supervisor (e.g., company officer), is a primary element in resilience and fostered a psychological safe environment for women endure the challenges of pursuing the fire service as a career path.
- All participants were able to explain how the barriers they faced challenged them and how the support of both line officers and that of senior officers (including the executive level) provided assurance, validation, and affirmation. While there were varying expressed levels of self-confidence and empowerment, all eight of the participants gave significant credit to these leadership actions.
- While trust is a trait not easily fostered and psychological safety of the group is a term not often used within the fire service, study results suggest that women view both as critical elements in promoting growth and longevity within their fire service careers by ensuring access to training opportunities, career development, and experiential learning.
- Further data collection is necessary to comprehensively evaluate how women view trust within the firehouse. Highlighting the critical need for psychological safety at local and national events for the purpose of creating awareness is an important next step for data collection and discussion. More importantly, a comprehensive understanding of trust and psychological safety within the fire service contributes to the development of training and educational programs designed to support fire service leaders in creating more inclusive fire departments.
- Advocacy for recruitment and retention of women in fire service careers is already present to some extent in the curriculum at the National Fire Academy; however, this study recommends increasing efforts to build upon and expand the existing curriculum for both managing and executive-level officers. Building out a more comprehensive curriculum should focus on providing more tailored guidance for managing and executive officers in efforts to create inclusive environments that foster access to opportunities for women across all ranks. Additionally, providing instructional materials that demonstrate how to correctly identify and mitigate non-inclusive promotional policies and practices and will be a critical next step.



U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy





2024 Executive Fire Officer and Leadership Symposium



U.S. Fire Administration
National Fire Academy

Day one | Friday, April 5, 2024

7:30 - 8 a.m.	Conference registration E Building, first floor
8 - 8:10 a.m.	Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance Chief Trey Mayo
8:10 - 8:20 a.m.	Opening remarks Eriks Gabliks, National Fire Academy (NFA) superintendent
8:20 - 8:40 a.m.	Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program Updates Edward Kensler, Chief William Hyde, section staff
8:40 - 9 a.m.	Manno Award Chief Curvin Wolfgang
9 - 9:45 a.m.	Leadership Lessons From the Lab Dr. Daniel Madrzykowski, senior director of research for the Underwriters Laboratories Firefighter Safety Research Institute
9:45 - 10 a.m.	Break
10 - 11 a.m.	Building Resilience in Leadership: Strategies for Growth and Confidence John Tippett, director of fire programs, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
11 a.m. - noon	Leadership Through Upstream Thinking Kristopher T. Blume, fire chief of the Meridian Fire Department (Idaho)
Noon - 1:15 p.m.	Lunch National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Dining Hall
1:15 - 2:15 p.m.	DEI/Diversity Fatigue Dr. Hezedeon Smith, fire chief at Polk County Fire and Rescue (Florida)
2:15 - 2:30 p.m.	Break
2:30 - 4 p.m.	Human Resources Hot Topics: Pregnancy, Drug Use, Others John Rukavina, director of Public Fire Safety Services
4 - 4:30 p.m.	EFO Section presentation Chief Curvin Wolfgang, Chief William Hyde, TBD
4:30 - 4:45 p.m.	Closing remarks Chief Trey Mayo
4:45 - 5 p.m.	Break
5 - 6 p.m.	Partner information tables, meet with authors of select EFO research papers, and reception at NETC Command Post Pub Hosted by International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) EFO Section

6 - 9 p.m.	IAFC/EFO Symposium Gathering The Ott House This is an independent event that is not affiliated with the NFA.
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Day two | Saturday, April 6, 2024

8 - 8:10 a.m.	Call to order, Pledge of Allegiance Chief Trey Mayo
8:10 - 9:30 a.m.	Chiefs panel Moderated by Eriks Gabliks, NFA superintendent
9:30 - 10:15 a.m.	Mental Health Dena Ali, battalion chief with the Raleigh Fire Department (North Carolina)
10:15 - 10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Safety/Injury Reduction Dr. Anthony Stowers, retired fire chief/emergency management director
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	Lunch NETC Dining Hall
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.	Put Your People in Their Place ... To Ensure Success Rudy Ruiz, founder/CEO of Resource Management Consultants
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	WUI/Risk Reduction Matt Samson, deputy fire chief of South San Francisco Fire Department Dave Winnacker, fire chief of Moraga-Orinda Fire District (California)
2:30 - 2:45 p.m.	Break
2:45 - 3:45 p.m.	Generational Leader Ellen Yarborough, deputy chief of South Media Fire Company
3:45 - 4:45 p.m.	Lessons in Leadership Charlie Dickinson, former U.S. deputy fire administrator and former Pittsburgh Fire Department chief
4:45 - 5 p.m.	NFA/EFO closing

All sessions will be held in E Auditorium unless otherwise noted.
Schedule subject to change.

