

# THE JOB GETS IN YOUR HEAD.



## MORE FIREFIGHTERS DIE BY SUICIDE EACH YEAR THAN IN THE LINE OF DUTY.

### 30%

of firefighters experienced  
behavioral health symptoms.

### COMMON DISORDERS AND RATES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

#### 20%

#### Depression

Male: 20% vs. 5.7% general male population.  
Female: 25 – 42% vs. 11.7% general female  
population.

#### 22%

#### PTSD

Found in large U.S. departments — vs. 3.5%  
nationally. Impairs decision-making on the  
fireground.

#### 32%

#### Anxiety

First responder prevalence during the COVID-19  
pandemic.

#### 56%

#### Binge Drinking

Male: 56%, Female: 40% of career firefighters  
in the past 30 days — 2 to 3 times the general  
population rate.

### WHY THIS HAPPENS



#### Repeated Trauma — Not Just Big Incidents

Daily exposure to death, suffering and chaos builds up.  
It doesn't take one catastrophic call to break someone  
down.



#### Beyond Operations

A toxic work environment — poor leadership,  
discrimination, favoritism and exclusion — is one of the  
top 2 causes of stress for firefighters, ahead of the calls  
themselves.



#### Sleep Deprivation Makes Everything Worse

Shift work amplifies emotional reactivity by 60%. No  
psychiatric disorder exists that is unrelated to sleep.



#### It Affects Your Performance on the Job

Firefighters with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)  
show measurably impaired situational awareness and  
decision-making in simulated fireground tasks.



#### "Toughing It Out" Isn't Working

Drinking to cope is common — and widely  
underrecognized as a coping mechanism rather than  
just culture.

### 46.8%

## NEARLY HALF OF FIREFIGHTERS SURVEYED REPORTED SUICIDAL IDEATION AT SOME POINT IN THEIR CAREER.

Peer support works. Resilience is trainable. Asking for help is not weakness — it's the job.

### WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS



#### PEER SUPPORT

Trained peers — not  
outside clinicians — are  
what firefighters  
respond to. Programs are  
expanding nationwide.



#### RESILIENCE TRAINING

Resilience is a trainable  
skill — not a personality  
trait. Programs show  
real reductions in PTSD  
and suicidal ideation.



#### CULTURALLY COMPETENT CARE

Clinicians who understand  
fire service culture get  
better engagement and  
outcomes than outside  
providers.



#### SLEEP AS A PRIORITY

Private sleep quarters,  
policy reform, and sleep  
hygiene aren't soft —  
they are evidence-based  
interventions.

READ THE FULL REPORT AT <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/behavioral-health-issues-in-the-fire-service.pdf>

## KNOW THE SIGNS. KNOW THE RESOURCES. KNOW IT'S REAL.



U.S. Fire Administration  
National Fire Data Center

[usfa.fema.gov](https://www.usfa.fema.gov)