



Florida Fire Chiefs' Association

Cancer and Mental Wellness Position Statement

Florida Fire Service is losing members at an alarming rate to cancer and suicide. Working in a collaborative effort with our other public safety partners, the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA) is directly focused on firefighter cancer and suicide prevention. We believe that a cultural change in the way we conduct business is clearly needed based on the overwhelming evidence. Our vision includes an introduction of formal education and curriculum for each certified firefighter in the State of Florida:

- Ensure that all certified firefighters be given a substantial introduction to the risk and prevention necessary for a safe career.
- Focus on creating a training component with appropriate curriculum designed to mitigate and prevent firefighter exposure and death.
- As suicide, post-traumatic stress, and catastrophic addictions have become the epidemic that is taking the lives of our members, the FFCA, along with our other public safety partners, has chosen to take a detailed look into the current programs and protocols in order to align our offering with industry best practice.

We are seeking amendments to Florida State Statute Chapter 633 to require training related to cancer and mental health risks for all career and volunteer firefighters seeking certification. We also want firefighter employers to provide training to existing employees. Firefighters are afflicted with cancer at a higher rate than the general population. Moreover, the suicide, post-traumatic stress, and catastrophic addictions are increasingly taking the lives of firefighters. We feel that education is the first step in reducing or preventing these risks. In addition, we are seeking to promote a tobacco free fire service in the State of Florida by having prospective firefighters sign an affidavit stating they will remain tobacco free for their tenure in the fire service.

We equip our firefighters with a myriad of tools, techniques, and training to handle the physical aspects of the calls they respond to. The selection process for the curriculum, training, and equipment utilized for the physical aspects of the job that we provide for these men and women were not randomly created. Each tool and technique was introduced as we found predictable patterns which required intervention and adaptation so that we did not repeat our past errors. Put quite simply; where a void was found in the current system and a life was negatively impacted; corrective action was taken, training was introduced and the tools were provided. This should also be the case for the mental health and wellness of our firefighters and other public safety personnel.

The FFCA is committed to seeking improved methods of education and training for our firefighters and other public safety personnel.

If you should have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the FFCA Government Relations Committee.

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