

National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week

Every year across our nation, communities come together to recognize National **Suicide Prevention Awareness Week (Sept. 6-12, 2020)** and **World Suicide Prevention Day** (September 10). In support of **these important dates**, the Department of Health and Division of Fire Safety would like to take a moment to promote mental health and to raise awareness among our communities to explore expanding efforts to prevent suicide.

We as first responders play a key role in preventing suicide in our community, from recognizing risk, to responding to individuals in distress, providing care and referring to appropriate resources.

It is also vital that we recognize that we as first responders are not immune from mental health distress or suicide. Due to the trauma and stressors that are inherent to our service to our community, we need to remain especially vigilant of our own and our colleague's mental health.

Taking care of our mental health, is necessary for our effectiveness and success in honoring our service to our community, our families, and each other. Mental health is a component of safety, and it is imperative that we treat it as such.

As part of our commitment to the first responder family, we must be courageous to reach out for support when we need it, and to reach out to fellow responders when they are facing difficult times.

Whether you are on the front line and in need of immediate help, or in a leadership position looking to offer better prevention programs and help for your staff and volunteers, this list should point you in the right direction.

Resources for mental health, suicide prevention and crisis support:

- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**: answered locally by trained counselors and available 24/7. The Lifeline is also available in Spanish and offers a prompt for veterans, or those concerned about a veteran, to connect to specially trained counselors.
 - Call **1-800-273-8255** or Chat <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- **Share the Load, Fire/EMS Helpline**: 1-888-731-FIRE (3473): a free, confidential helpline available 24/7 to support Firefighters and EMS personnel and the many unique challenges that can have a significant impact on their behavioral health.
- **Safe Call Now**: 206-459-3020 www.safecallnow.org/get-help-1.html

Safe Call Now is a confidential, comprehensive, 24-hour crisis referral service for all public safety employees, all emergency services personnel and their family members nationwide.

- [Take 5 To Save Life](#) Campaign including learning the warning signs when someone is struggling and how to help.
- Vermont Department of Health Suicide Prevention: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/emergency/injury/suicide-prevention>
- Mental Health First Aid for EMS/Fire training: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/population-focused-modules/fire-and-ems/>
- First Responders Center for Excellence: <https://www.firstrespondercenter.org/>
- National Volunteer Fire Council: <https://www.nvfc.org/suicide-prevention-week/>
- National Wildfire Coordinating Group: <https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/mental-health-subcommittee>
- Professional Firefighters Peer Support: 883-802-PEER

How you can make a difference today:

- Revisit your departments health and wellness plans to support your staff and volunteers to get the help people need. Pre-incident health and wellness training, post-incident care, internal support, and external counseling should all be part of your departments operating system.
- Take a minute to reach out to someone in your life, start a conversation if you notice something is different, and connect them to the appropriate help.
- We invite you to join us in a conversation so that we can work together as partners in suicide prevention, for all Vermont first responders, as well as for our community.

Stay Safe.