

Each year, hundreds of our emergency service peers commit suicide, and many more struggle with emotional and substance abuse issues.

#### What We Do

P.S. IT.'S. O.K. will provide awareness and education to mitigate the increasing problem of emergency services suicide, depression and related issues among public safety providers.

Programs will center around improvement of the well-being and safety of public safety workers and their families.

Use our resource lists, training programs, and consultations with our working group members to improve awareness in your organization and let your members know

**“P.S., IT’S OK  
to reach out  
for help.”**

P.S. I.T.'S. O. K.  
Western PA Firemens  
Association

PO Box 504, New Kensington, PA 15068

# P.S. I.T.'S. O.K.

Public Safety Initiative To Support Our Kind

P.S. I.T.'S. O.K. is an initiative begun by the Western Pennsylvania Firemen’s Association to address the issue of suicide, behavioral health issues, and substance abuse issues among emergency service workers from all disciplines.

A project of:

Western Pennsylvania Firemen’s Association in cooperation with various academic and clinical resources throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania





Photo Credit: [www.emsworld.com](http://www.emsworld.com)

## A Look at the Facts:

Currently, there is no uniform tracking of suicide, behavioral health and substance abuse issues in the emergency services as a whole. Many valid, statistical studies have been done around the issues of PTSD, suicidal thoughts, and substance abuse issues have been published in recent years, providing a stark look into the reality of the mental health issues faced by those of us involved in emergency response, all the way from the dispatcher, to first responders, to organizational leadership.

One of the voluntary suicide reporting mechanisms has been established by the Firefighter's Behavioral Health Alliance. They receive anonymous reports of firefighter suicides and then validate the information by contacting agency leadership confidentially to assure accuracy. They have amassed the following number of verified firefighter suicides in the United States:

Firefighter Suicide Deaths by Year in the US  
**2020 – 124**  
**(98 FFs and 26 EMTs) (1 CS)**  
**2019 – 144**  
**(123 FFs and 21 EMT)**  
**2018 – 116**  
**(94 FFs and 22 EMT) (2 CS)**  
**as of 10/17/21**

## What You Can Do:

We in the emergency services often see ourselves as the ones who always have to “be strong.” It’s often hard to admit that we sometimes need help, too. One of the main goals of the initiative is to make sure that all emergency service workers realize that it is O.K. to reach out for help and that they can do so confidentially.

As a member of the emergency services, keep tabs on your peers, and most importantly, yourself. Be the agent of a cultural change that lets everyone know that it’s isn’t a sign of weakness to reach out for help—but rather a sign of strength to know you need to maintain your own mental well-being to be able to continue to help others.

## Ways We Can Help

We can help provide:

- Resources to provide referrals during times of crisis
- Training for your leadership, members, and families
- Assistance in assessing your organization and development of policy and procedures



Photo Credit: [www.emssuccess.com](http://www.emssuccess.com)

## Some Initial Resources

### National Volunteer Fire Council

**Share the Load Program: 1-888-731-FIRE(3473)**

This is a 24-hour help line for emergency responders needing assistance.

### Safe Call Now

**Emergency Services Behavioral Health Hotline: 1-206-459-3020**

This is a 24-hour help line for emergency responders needing assistance.

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

#### **Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

This is a 24-hour suicide prevention hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call is routed to the nearest crisis center in the national network of more than 150 crisis centers.

## Contact Us

Western PA Firemen’s Association  
PO Box 504  
New Kensington, PA 15068

724-339-1017  
office@wpfa.org

Visit us on the Web:  
[www.wpfa.org](http://www.wpfa.org)