



CAFC Fact Sheet

National Roundtable on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

The Issue

1. Operational Stress Injuries

- Studies completed in the 1990's have demonstrated that occupational stress outcomes for firefighters include: high levels of alcoholism and substance abuse; a suicide rate that is 30% higher than that of comparison groups; and marital problems that are 50% higher than that of comparison groups.

2. Nature of Mental Health

- More than half of the people with mental health problems are unwilling to disclose or seek treatment.
- Among firefighters, some of the known barriers to using mental health services are: the stigma of mental illness; the fear it will have a negative impact on careers; lack of knowledge on how to access existing services; lack of resources to pay for services; and lack of available services.

3. Composition of the Fire Service

- Volunteer departments have a unique set of challenges related to, for example: lack of time to train personnel, lack of resources for education/support programs, and absence of peer support as a result of less time spent together. For volunteer and composite departments the lack of mental wellness programs might be a factor hindering recruitment efforts.

4. Current Fire Service Practices

- Inconsistent practices across the country in: screening/assessment of mental health as part of recruitment; recognition of the role of mental health in overall wellness; recognition of the importance of the investment in mental wellness support for firefighters; and provision of education/support/training programs for current and former fire service personnel and their families.

The Gap: Evidence Based Research

- To improve the capacity of the fire service and health professionals to: (a) quantify the prevalence and type of mental health issues affecting the fire service and (b) properly guide education, diagnosis and treatment efforts; and (c) improve firefighters' mental health resilience and literacy.
- That supports the reduction of treatment barriers and the standard provision of mental health services for firefighters and work compensation policies across the country.

Moving forward: Together we are stronger

- CAFC is strongly committed to continue working with the Government and key stakeholders to develop long-term sustainable initiatives that enhance and support the abilities of Fire Services across Canada to prepare for, respond to and assist their current and former personnel with their mental wellness needs. Working together will allow us to leverage resources, avoid effort duplication, take advantage of knowledge synergies, and guarantee alignment.

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

Founded in 1909, the CAFC is an independent, non-profit organization representing approximately 3,500 fire departments across Canada. As the voice of fire services in Canada, the CAFC promotes the highest standard of public safety in an ever changing and increasingly complex world. CAFC acts as the national public service association dedicated to reducing the loss of life and property from fire. For more information on the CAFC, visit our website: www.cafc.ca



Media Contact:

Erika Adams

Director Policy, Research and Communications

613.220.6182

eadams@cafc.ca