



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GlendaleAZ.com/Fire

Glendale Fire Department

6829 North 58th Drive / Glendale, Arizona 85301

623-930-4400



September 19, 2018

CONTACT: Firefighter Ashley Losch, PIO, 623-986-0148

FIREFIGHTERS SAW AN INCREASE IN SUICIDES IN 2017

Glendale, Ariz.- Firefighters saw an increase in suicides in 2017 at 103 from the 93 reported in 2016.

Mental health and PTSD are becoming a more pertinent concern in the fire service. 84% of first responders have reportedly experienced a traumatic event while on the job. As firefighters, we are expected to show up and mitigate all emergencies that we are faced with. Tasked with putting personal emotions and feelings aside to do the unimaginable, firefighters do it every day. There is nothing more devastating than holding a dead baby in your arms and doing everything you can to save their life, only to learn that they did not survive. Knowing that you were their last chance and that there was nothing you could do for them is never a comfort. But it has become a sad reality. Death and destruction has become a part of the job description. Even knowing that coming into the fire service you cannot possibly imagine the things you will actually see and do.

Most firefighters learn to compartmentalize the things that we see and do. But there is no magic pill to make the images go away. Some calls will never leave you. It is imperative that firefighters learn to talk about what they have seen, felt and experienced. And to process all that they have seen and done before it is too late. In the general population, suicidal ideations have been reported by 6-14% of the people. 47% of firefighters have reported these same ideations. That is an astounding difference. And while only 2-9% of the general population actually attempt suicide, 16% of firefighters will make an attempt to take their own life. If more focus is not placed on the mental health of firefighters, we are sure to see statistics rise. The Glendale Fire Department has put a multitude of resources in place to help our firefighters with the stresses of the job. Programs like Fire Strong, peer support, member services and our incredible Chaplain are here around the clock to help members cope with the incomprehensible tragedies they are faced with every day.

For National Suicide Awareness Month, we are educating our members on what resources are available to them and taking time to talk to the public about the stresses firefighters face every day. The Glendale Fire Department will forever be here to serve the public on their worst day. Always hoping it does not lead to a tragedy for one of our own.

###

