



*Fire Fighter Mental
Health & PTSD*

**KEEPING OUR
— COLLEAGUES —
SAFE**

Information Sheet

ADDRESSING POST TRAUMATIC STRESS INJURIES AND DISORDERS

Background

Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act became law in 2016. This bill recognized that Ontario's first responders are exposed to trauma through the course of their work and that these exposures have a lasting impact. In addition to the trauma and potential injuries to first responders there are additional economic impacts that are staggering.

Subsequent to the bill, Government has mandated municipalities to submit their PTSD prevention plans and programs which are available on the Ministry of Labour website. It is not clear if these plans have been reviewed and held to a standard of any kind, or that there has been a requirement for municipalities to implement and follow through with their submitted plans.

OPFFA leaders have worked to bring together workers, employers and health care providers across Ontario to share knowledge and experiences in order to learn and improve on best practices.

Steps have been taken, many have received help, but there remains more opportunity to treat injuries and return people to a more normalized life that includes the benefits of being in the workplace and having supports in place.

What We are Doing and Where We Can Be

Fire fighters face an array of exposures and like other first responders have unique working conditions that many will never know. The public does not see the faces of desperation, death and destruction as first responders do. We see these faces in our communities and in our fellow fire fighters as well.

When fire fighters recognize that they are suffering the effects of post traumatic stress, often their life is upside down and unmanageable. They seek help but find themselves lost in the system where many do not understand the culture and life of a fire fighter and more often than not the system fails them.

The OPFFA has been working with a group of municipalities, Fire Chiefs, and union representatives to bring education to many, including municipal

human relations personnel, WSIB management and others. This continues as they look at best practices for WSIB claim management, employee management at the municipal level, treatment options and progressive return to life then return to work programs.

We would be interested in further highlighting models such as those between Work Safe BC and the British Columbia Professional Fire Fighters Association.

We will continue to meet with the Ministry of Labour, Minister and staff and with PSAC the Public Services Health and Safety Association to research and develop programs and training to reduce the risks and foster recovery from post traumatic stress injuries.

Copies of correspondence and any further inquiries should be forwarded to:

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