



OPERATIONS ROUTINE

ROUTINE

Healthy daily habits and awareness
can play a key role in preventing
illness and injury on the job—and off

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TOTAL BODY WELLNESS COMPONENT

How the body performs is the best indicator of what is going on inside of it. If it doesn't feel right, it might not be. All fire fighters are encouraged to listen to their bodies and get checked at the first sign of abnormal issues and symptoms.

There are many important components to help the body stay cancer-free in the fire service. A key step is to never start using tobacco products of any kind. If a member occasionally smokes cigarettes, e-cigs or cigars, or dips smokeless tobacco, they are encouraged to stop immediately. Regular use of a sunscreen or sunblock can help prevent skin cancer. General wellness can be achieved by regular exercise, a healthy diet and, most of all, awareness of what is going on in the body.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Physical fitness is crucial for fire fighters as it helps to prevent injuries, improve job performance, increase career longevity and enhance quality of life after retirement. To perform effectively and safely in the fire service, a fire fighter must have high levels of aerobic fitness, muscular endurance, strength, power and flexibility. The physically demanding tasks performed on the fireground can put stress on the heart, making it important for fire fighters to maintain their fitness levels to reduce the risk of heart attacks, which are a leading cause of fire fighter fatalities. Maintaining fitness throughout one's career, working out on shift, and promoting camaraderie among crew and station members are important for the overall well-being of fire fighters.

The Fit to Thrive program (F2T) developed by the IAFF is a significant step forward in the promotion of fitness and wellness in the fire service. By supporting the Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI), F2T aims to encourage fire fighters to be more active and adopt healthier lifestyles. The program's connection to the Peer Fitness Trainer (PFT) program highlights the importance of peer support and mentorship in promoting wellness and fitness among fire fighters. The IAFF's commitment to improving the health and well-being of fire fighters through programs like F2T is commendable and has the potential to make a positive impact on the fire service community.

The F2T program is a comprehensive approach to promoting wellness and fitness among fire fighters. By providing direct access to resources that address the specific needs of each fire department, the program aims to help certified members effectively serve as ambassadors for wellness and fitness. The focus on practical strategies for improving physical, psychological and social well-being is a key aspect of the program, as is the commitment to accommodating the diverse needs and interests of all fire fighters. By making education, training, mentorship and support accessible, the program seeks to encourage behavior change and help fire fighters maintain their health and wellness.



ABOVE: Research shows that aerobic fitness and muscular strength and endurance help members to perform safely and effectively in the fire service.

Building a program for fire fighters requires genuine, passionate and influential leadership from all levels of a department. In addition to leadership, a successful wellness program also should prioritize the following characteristics:

Comprehensive: The program should address various aspects of wellness, including physical, mental and emotional health. It also should cover topics such as nutrition, sleep, stress management and injury prevention.

Evidence-based: The program should be based on scientific evidence and research, and it should be regularly updated as new information becomes available.

Relevant: The program should be tailored to the unique demands of firefighting, taking into account the physical and mental challenges of the job.

Accessible: The program should be easily accessible to all fire fighters, regardless of their rank or location. This could include online resources, group classes or individual coaching.

Inclusive: The program should be inclusive and welcoming to all fire fighters, regardless of their age, gender or fitness level.

Cultural change: The program should aim to create a culture of wellness within the department, with a focus on prevention and proactive health practices.

Collaboration and communication: The program should encourage frequent collaboration and communication between all parties involved, including labor, management and peer fitness trainers. This can help ensure that the program remains relevant and effective over time.

Fire Department Culture Regarding Best Practices

Best practices are crucial in the fire service to attain optimal health and safety outcomes for fire fighters. The culture within the fire service plays a significant role in shaping the well-being of fire fighters. By prioritizing their physical and mental health, we can address cultural norms that might downplay the importance of factors impacting their safety. This recognition is essential in tackling the growing challenges faced by fire fighters, including severe injuries, mental health issues and cancer.

To effectively address these challenges, continuous progress is necessary in recognizing the significance of total worker health. Fire department and union leaders play a vital role in promoting health and safety initiatives. They should prioritize supporting fire fighters by providing adequate training and resources, enforcing preventive policies and fostering a culture that values well-being. These initiatives can include regular health screenings, facilitating access to mental health resources, promoting physical fitness, and emphasizing the importance of proper fire station and apparatus design.

By prioritizing the overall well-being of fire fighters and adopting a comprehensive approach to health and safety, significant benefits can be achieved. Not only can this approach prevent costs associated with injuries and illnesses, but it also ensures the long-term health of fire fighters throughout their careers and into retirement. By implementing best practices, the fire service can create an environment that values the physical and mental well-being of its members, resulting in safer and healthier fire fighters who are better equipped to serve their communities.