Edmonton Fire Rescue Services Health and Wellness Programming: A Holistic Approach to Physical and Mental Readiness

Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Conference | 05 07 2018
Presentation Outline

Introduction to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Mental Health and Wellness Programming
Fire Chief Ken G. Block, ECFO
Edmonton Fire Rescue Services

Career highlights include:

- Appointed City of Edmonton's Fire Chief February 1, 2009
- 30+ years firefighter

Board of Directors, President, Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs

Past President, Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association

Chair, Governance Council, Alberta First Responders Radio Communications System

Presidential Advisor, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Board of Directors

President, Edmonton Firefighter's Union 2001 - 2007 (three terms)
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

**Edmonton Quick Facts:**
- Area of Coverage: 701 km² (270 square miles)
- City Population: 932,546 (2016, Statistics Canada)

**Economy***: 
- GDP of $85.5 billion (2016)
- GDP growth of -2.7% (2016, Canadian growth of 1.3%)
- Edmonton’s economy revolves around the oil, gas and energy industry sectors

**Did you know?**
- Edmonton’s river valley is North America’s largest urban park space, 22 times larger than Central Park in New York City
- Edmonton has a northern mid-latitude climate with very long summer days and up to 2,300 hours of sunlight per year (up to 17 hours per day)

*Information Source: The Conference Board of Canada*
2017 Fire Rescue Services delivered to our community

**Total Dispatched Events: 50,603**
- Medical Response Events: 33,791
- Alarms Response Events: 7,771
- Rescue Response Events: 4,073
- Fire Suppression Response Events: 2,969
- Dangerous Goods Response Events: 1,999

With:
- 1,285 Full Time Equivalent positions
- 30 Active Fire Stations
- 29 Pumper, 9 Ladder, 8 Rescue, 5 Tanker trucks in service
- Fire Prevention and Fire Investigation Units
- Training Academy and Practical Training facility
- Emergency Response Communications Dispatch Centre
- Emergency Operations Centre
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Background

• With passing of presumptive cancer legislation in the early 2000’s came the opportunity for a Health and Wellness program, which was initiated in 2005.

• The joint program, between Edmonton Fire Rescue Services and the Edmonton Fire Fighters Union is voluntary, confidential and non-punitive.

• Program is modeled from the International Association of Fire Chiefs and International Association of Firefighters Wellness Fitness Initiative (WFI).

• Components of the program include: medical evaluation, fitness assessment, injury prevention and rehabilitation as well as nutritional and behavioural health.

• Program is designed to improve the life for all firefighters while simultaneously seeking to prove the value of investing wellness resources over time.
What is included

- Peer fitness trainers
- Fitness tests and functional fitness training
- Quarterly newsletters
- Medical assessments
- Healthy back initiative
- Cardiovascular educational programming
- Medical clinic
- Early cancer detections
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Peer fitness trainers

• There are currently 27 IAFF/WFI ACE certified peer fitness trainers.

• Trainers deliver educational and instructional programming which includes:

  • preventative exercise
  • mobility and restorative exercise
  • exercise prescription for on duty health and fitness
Through utilization of the Peer Fitness Trainer program, fitness for duty is tested annually on a voluntary basis.
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Healthy back initiative

- Informs firefighters on the perils of poor low back maintenance and exercise.
- Mobility protocols are designed to prevent injury to the lower back and encourage healthy low back habits.
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Cardiovascular educational programming

- Joint program and agreement between Edmonton Fire Rescue Services, Lifemark Medical Group and the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute.

- If a cardiovascular issue is identified through the Occupational Health Medical then that case is directly referred, on top priority basis, to a cardiologist for further testing and case management.
Quarterly newsletters

- Timely health and wellness information is distributed to staff in the “Health for Life” quarterly newsletter.

- Topics covered include:
  - benefits of getting a medical
  - proper event decontamination
  - sleep and nutritional tips
  - mental health tips and advice
  - other motivational and informative articles
Medical clinic

• The medical clinic is a joint Edmonton Fire Rescue Services and Edmonton Fire Fighters Union initiative created to provide occupational health screening.

• The clinic provides occupational health medicals for all uniformed staff.

• The clinic employs:
  – a full-time doctor who specializes in occupational health medicine
  – several occupational health nurses
  – a clinic director
  – an administrative assistant
Medical assessments

The annual medical assessment is broken into two phases:

- Diagnostics / laboratory work (medical requisitions)
- Comprehensive clinical assessment (occupational testing)
Medical assessments

Medical Requisitions

- Blood analysis
- Heavy metal screening
- Urinalysis
- Chest x-ray
- Electrocardiogram
- Fecal occult blood testing
- Prostrate specific antigen
Occupational Testing - Comprehensive Physical Examination

• Vital Signs
• Head, ears, nose, throat
• Cardiovascular
• Gastrointestinal
• Genitourinary
• Digital rectal
• Lymph nodes
• Neurological
• Musculoskeletal
Medical assessments

**Occupational Testing - Vision Test**

- Assessment of vision must include evaluation of distance, near, peripheral and color vision.

**Occupational Testing - Pulmonary Function Test**

- Significant deterioration from baseline measures (greater than 15%) prompts further investigation.
Medical assessments

**Occupational Testing – Cancer Screening Elements**

- Invasive examinations (breast exam, pap smear, DRE, FOB, testicular exam) must be conducted with the annual exam.

- Prostate specific antigen and digital rectal exam performed annually on male uniformed personnel after the age of 45.

- Fecal occult blood testing performed on all male uniformed personnel.

- Skin exam performed annually on all male and female uniformed personnel.
**Physical Health and Wellness Programming**

### Early cancer detections

- Since inception of the joint medical clinic, many successful early detections have occurred, saving lives and helping keep firefighters safe.
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Decontamination

- Current programming is in place to change the culture and attitudes around decontamination.

- Updates to SOP’s and SOG’s are in development:
  - donning and doffing
  - gross decontamination
  - bagging and transportation
  - self-decontamination procedures

- Mobile decontamination unit to be used for on scene decon and rehab.
Physical Health and Wellness Programming

Decontamination
Mental Health and Wellness Programming

Introduction of a mental and behavioural health program

• During 2014, Edmonton Fire Rescue experienced the suicide death of a member that resonated with many throughout the service.

• In partnership, Administration and the Union Executive committed to support our members by introducing a program to address health and wellness, both physical and mental.

• An organizational objective for 2015 was to work toward developing a comprehensive and customized mental and behavioural health program, focusing on awareness and education.

• With the positive engagement from preliminary mental health programming efforts, a full time Mental Health Coordinator was hired in 2016.
Mental Health and Wellness Programming

Training: Mental Health First Aid

- Developed and introduced by Professors Anthony Jorm and Betty Kitchener from the Centre for Mental Health Research at the Australian National University.

- Is a Mental Health Commission of Canada endorsed program.

- Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.

- Mental Health First Aid Basic Instructor training is a five-day course.

- Instructors deliver two-day Mental Health First Aid training sessions to Edmonton Fire Rescue Services staff members, beginning with senior ranking personnel.
Mental Health and Wellness Programming

Training: Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR)

- R2MR is based on a program initially developed by the Canadian Department of National Defence and adapted for the special needs of a first responder audience.

- The main objectives of R2MR are to reduce the stigma of mental illnesses, increase awareness of mental health, and offer resources to maintain positive mental health and increase resiliency.

- R2MR Instructors participate in a five-day Train the Trainer course. Instructors deliver four-hour Road to Mental Readiness training sessions to all Edmonton Fire Rescue Services staff.

- R2MR training includes the mental health continuum model, a self-assessment tool which is designed to provide participants with various indicators of positive, poor and declining mental health.
# Mental Health Continuum Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEALTHY</th>
<th>REACTING</th>
<th>INJURED</th>
<th>ILL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Good Mental Health and Normal Functioning</em></td>
<td><em>Common, Self-Limiting Distress</em></td>
<td><em>More Severe Functional Impairment</em></td>
<td><em>Severe and Persistent Functional Impairment</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Normal mood; Calm; Confident</td>
<td>- Irritable; Impatient; Nervous</td>
<td>- Angry, Anxious, Pervasive Sadness</td>
<td>- Easily enraged; Excessive anxiety/panic; Depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Good sense of humour, concentration, and focus</td>
<td>- Distracted/lose focus; Biting humour; Intrusive thoughts</td>
<td>- Negative attitude; Recurrent intrusive thoughts; No focus</td>
<td>- Noncompliant; Memory loss; Suicidal thoughts/intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Physically/Socially active; Performing well; Healthy alcohol use/gambling</td>
<td>- Decreased activity or socializing; Regular substance use; Procrastinate</td>
<td>- Avoidance; Tardiness; Decreased performance; Substance use hard to control</td>
<td>- Withdrawal; Absenteeism; Can't perform duties/tasks; Addiction Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Normal Sleep; Healthy Eating Pattern; Energetic; Stable Weight</td>
<td>- Trouble sleeping; Changes in eating; Lowered energy; Some weight gain or loss</td>
<td>- Restless sleep; No appetite; Overeating; Increased fatigue; weight fluctuations</td>
<td>- Insomnia; Oversleeping; Constant fatigue/exhaustion; Extreme weight change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Actions to Take during Each Phase of the Continuum

- **HEALTHY**: Nurture healthy support - Break problems into manageable tasks - Self-awareness and self-care
- **REACTING**: Recognize personal limits - Get rest, food, exercise - Use healthy coping strategies
- **INJURED**: Reach out for help; talk to someone - Prioritize self-care - Maintain social contact; Don’t withdraw
- **ILL**: Access resources available - Seek consultation - Follow care recommendations - Respect Confidentiality

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*If you are looking for Mental Health Resources but are not in crisis, contact a member of the EFRS Peer Support Team or the Mental Health Coordinator for assistance.*
Mental Health and Wellness Programming

Peer Support Team

- Beginning in 2017, selected Edmonton Fire Rescue Services staff members were engaged with specialized training in order to provide peer support services.

- 30 staff members have received and will continue to receive ongoing training on mental health and resources available in the community. Training includes courses such as Suicide Intervention and Critical Incident Stress Management.

- The Peer Support Team is comprised of members from across the organization, representing all platoon shifts and program areas including Operations, Dispatch, Fire Prevention and Fire Investigations.

- Team members are not a substitute for professional mental health experts. They have committed to support their peers who are struggling with personal issues.
Edmonton Fire Health and Wellness Video

https://vimeo.com/235816010/678fb70be0
Wilson, Edward Orville
December 16, 1922

Bruce, William
January 13, 1940

Robinson, Robbie
October 7, 1948

Bowen, Walter
April 22, 1951

Vint, Robert
June 14, 1963

Brackenbury, Ray
December 3, 1964

Clark, Murray
August 15, 1976

Hopp, Ralph
August 15, 1976

(8 fireground deaths)

Kopinsky, John
May 30, 1992

Ashton, Les
December 23, 2002

Borecki, Randy
November 23, 2003

Wyndham, Paul
January 18, 2004

Tymchuk, Rick
October 28, 2005

Stevens, Clarke
August 19, 2006

Hayman, Larry
September 20, 2007

Nichol, Stanley
April 25, 2008

Harris, Alex
June 20, 2009

Chalmers, Robert
July 6, 2009

Northrup, Allan
December 13, 2011

Colcy, Lionel
February 28, 2012

Mathews, Don
February 20, 2013

Humeniuk, Joseph
January 4, 2014

D’Agostini, Alberto
June 12, 2014

Iampen, Marcel
April 1, 2015

Paul, Edward
July 2, 2015

Simpson, Gerald
December 16, 2015

McGill, Robert
September 17, 2016

McDonald, Evan
February 25, 2018

(20 occupational cancer deaths)
Contact Information

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