

USFA AND NVFC RELEASE UPDATED HEALTH AND WELLNESS GUIDE FOR THE VOLUNTEER FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emmitsburg, MD - The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), working with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), has issued a revised Health and Wellness Guide for the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services (PDF, 2.1 Mb, Adobe Acrobat PDF Help). The Health and Wellness Guide now provides updated information on health and wellness issues, trends, and programs focused on the needs of the volunteer fire service. The document addresses fitness including aerobic exercise, flexibility, strength training, diet; smoking cessation; and other areas that will have a positive impact on volunteer firefighters.

“This partnership to improve the health and wellness of the volunteer fire service will support reducing the primary cause of on-duty deaths in the volunteer fire service – heart attack and stress,” said Acting Assistant Administrator Dr. Denis Onieal. “Effective health and wellness programs will also be expected to contribute to operational effectiveness of volunteer fire departments as well as serve as a valuable retention and recruitment instrument.”

The prevalence of cardiovascular illness and deaths and work-inhibiting strains and sprains among firefighters illustrates the need for a comprehensive health and wellness program in every department. Yet department leaders often struggle to implement a program due to a variety of reasons, including resistance or lack of motivation from members, the costs associated with implementing a program, and the lack of well-defined requirements.

“With heart attack, overexertion, and strain causing more firefighter deaths and injuries than any other cause, it is critically important for departments and personnel to focus on health and wellness,” said NVFC Chairman Philip C. Stittleburg. “The NVFC is pleased to partner with the USFA to create a guide to help departments develop life-saving health and wellness initiatives and overcome the obstacles to a successful program.”

The Health and Wellness Guide demonstrates ways to overcome these obstacles, and provides direction for developing and implementing a department program. It also highlights several existing health and wellness programs and how they have maintained their success over time. Originally released in 1992 and updated several times, the 2009 version includes new information and resources to help departments ensure the health and well-being of their members.

The Health and Wellness Guide for the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services also provides the most current information on how volunteer fire departments can enhance compliance with appropriate National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firefighter Health and Safety Standards such as NFPA Standard 1583 - Health Related Fitness Programs for Fire Fighters.

For more information on all USFA programs and activities, visit the USFA Web site.

National Volunteer Fire Council: <http://www.nvfc.org/>

Health and Wellness Guide for the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services:
http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_321.pdf

U.S. Fire Administration: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/index.shtm>



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