



FIRE SERVICE WOMEN ONTARIO

in this issue

MENTAL HEALTH

Overcoming the Stigma

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Get to know Amber Bowman!

JUST BREATHE

Learn the art of calm communication

plus...

- + *Pink Helmet - We Remember Wendy Krebsz*
- + *Prevention Division Special Programs*
- + *Becoming a Member*
- + *The Move Toward Interagency Coordination*



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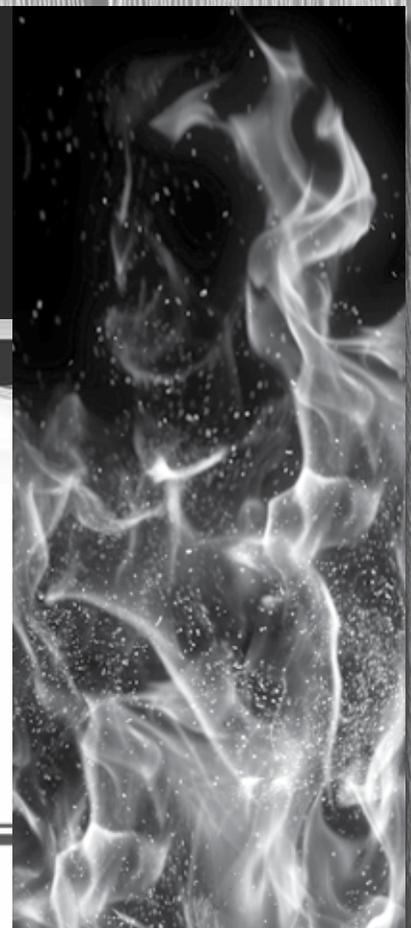


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In This Issue

on the cover



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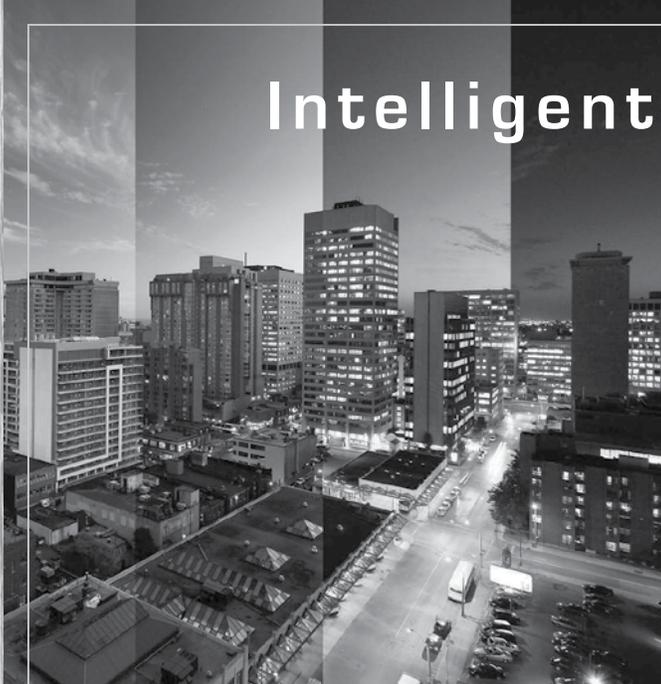
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A Message from the Premier



Premier of Ontario - Première ministre de l'Ontario

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am pleased to extend warm greetings to the readers of Fire Service Women Ontario's Annual Publication.

Since its inception, this fine organization has worked tirelessly to build a supportive network, inspire positive change and foster an inclusive workforce for women. By working in the best interests of women in the fire service, your organization has had a positive impact and helped to increase the awareness of the invaluable service women firefighters provide in Ontario.

This annual publication does much to recognize important role models and mentors in the industry, highlight the achievements and draw attention to the important contributions women in the fire service have made to building safe and secure communities.

I commend Fire Service Women Ontario on creating this important resource and thank its members for the vital roles they play in helping to protect our citizens and their property.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen Wynne".

Kathleen Wynne
Premier



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A Note from the Minister

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Minister's Message for Fire Service Women Ontario

On behalf of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and our government, I am pleased to extend greetings to Fire Service Women Ontario (FSWO).

Our government applauds the bravery shown by our firefighters and all first responders—reminding us all that public service and dedicating your life's work to serving our communities and protecting those who call it home—is one of the highest callings to which we can aspire.

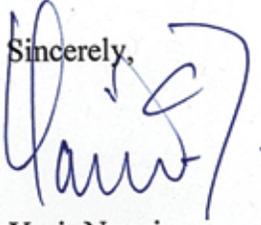
The FSWO embody those qualities of duty, service, and sacrifice every day.

In just a few short years, the FSWO has developed into an affirmative and progressive organization that inspires its members to champion diversity in all ranks of the fire service, from public education and fire safety standards to training, emergency response, and senior officer roles. The lived experiences of your members help confront stereotypes, break down barriers and build more diverse, stronger fire services in communities right across the province.

The FSWO is to be commended for the vital support, mentoring, and education it provides to its members. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services praises the FSWO for the pride its members demonstrate as dedicated fire service professionals.

I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to all of you for the important work you undertake in keeping our communities safe. Ontarians are grateful for your service and value your achievements.

Sincerely,


Yasir Naqvi
Minister

A Note from Our President



ON BEHALF OF THE FIRE SERVICE WOMEN ONTARIO (FSWO) BOARD OF DIRECTORS I HOPE you all had a safe winter. Our job comes with many challenges no matter the time of year, but adding snow and below freezing temperatures just adds another element to it; it's nice to see the green peaking through.

The FSWO Board of Directors has been very busy this winter planning to ensure we are doing all we can for our membership.

In February our board met for a face to face meeting and spent a full day discussing how we can best serve our membership. We have a lot of work to do but are very excited about the opportunities this presents us with. We have determined that many fire service personnel either are not aware of our organization, or do not understand who we are and what we do. We enlisted the help of a communications expert to discuss how to better communicate with and reach our target audience, women and men in the fire service. We are beginning to work on a new strategy and hope we can reach out to more members and fire service partners to engage in our mission: to Educate, Encourage, and Empower all members of the fire service in an effort to be progressive and inclusive.

In March, I was given the opportunity to attend the iWomen Conference with our Vice President, Allison Vickerd in Sacramento, California. We attended two days of in-class sessions and were able to bring back valuable information for our board, including some potential speakers for our own conference. We enjoyed the networking and meeting many women and men who are working on improving the diversity and inclusion of the Fire Service. Statistics tell us the number of women entering this profession is not increasing enough to make any substantial changes. My hope is to share best practices with as many Fire Service leaders from both management and labour to engage in some meaningful discussions; stay tuned for more!

Planning is well underway for our 2016 Annual Conference. This year we are partnering with Southwest Fire Academy and Training Division to host our 6th Annual Conference titled "Challenging the Present, Shaping the Future". It will be held in Tillsonburg, Ontario, November 11-13, 2016. We work hard to balance our approach of providing speakers and classes that many members have enjoyed at past conferences, and introducing new courses and presenters to ensure we keep the conference current and meaningful.

Many of you are already aware that we are now on Facebook. Our hope is to reach out to more members and share any information that can benefit fire service members across the province. Check us out on Facebook for updates on our Conference and other initiatives we are working on.

As always, we welcome your questions, concerns and suggestions to help us improve our service. Please feel free to contact us at fswontario@gmail.com

Thank you for your continued support and I hope to hear from you soon,

LOUISE HINE SCHMIDT
FSWO President

A Note from the 2015 Conference Host



City of Mississauga
Fire & Emergency Services
300 City Centre Drive
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AS THE 2015 FIRE SERVICE WOMEN ONTARIO CONFERENCE host city, the City of Mississauga Fire & Emergency Services (MFES) is proud to be a member and a supporter. Continuous improvement in all aspects of the fire service should be a goal for every organization. MFES has a vision to be a global leader and with that requires we continue to promote and achieve excellence. We are on our way to achieving excellence in diversity and inclusiveness, ensuring that we continue to create a positive workplace. FSWO is committed to ensuring similar values in organizations and that makes us proud to align ourselves with this organization.

Being a member should be on everyone's radar showing that the fire service is progressive, inclusive, and engaging of everyone. Keep up the great work FSWO and best wishes for a successful 2016 Conference.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Tim Beckett'.

Tim Beckett,
Fire Chief

....

Tim Beckett is the Fire Chief with Mississauga Fire & Emergency Services and, along with MFES, the first recipient of the Fire Service Women Ontario Diversity and Inclusion Award.



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Meet the Board of Directors

Our 2016 Board of Directors have been hard at work to provide opportunities and resources to the Fire Service Women Ontario Community! Match the names to the faces and be sure to say hello if you see one of them in your neighbourhood!



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Ottawa Fire Services*



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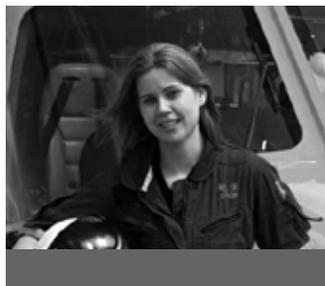
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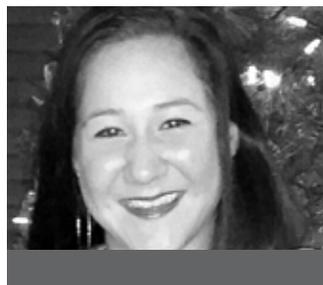
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Wendy Krebsz – The Pink Helmet of Courage

by Sue Jones & Michelle Gervais



LEADING UP TO OUR CONFERENCE IN 2015, WE WERE PRESENTED with an opportunity to create something special called the Pink Helmet of Courage. Timmins Firefighter and Fire Service Women Ontario board member, Michelle Gervais was contacted about a special woman named Wendy Krebsz. Wendy was a firefighter and Fire Prevention officer for 11 years before being stricken with cancer. She was a fierce Firefit competitor and was avidly involved in the School Fire Prevention Programs.

It was clear from conversations with firefighters, friends and her husband, Duncan, that Wendy clearly represented the 3E's Fire Service Women Ontario strives for; Educate, Encourage, Empower! Duncan asked if we could take a group picture or send a shout out to Wendy, as she was questioning her service and whether she had made enough of an impact in her career. Again, it was clear, from others' descriptions of her character and dedication to Fire Safety, that she had.

Our sponsor Starfield Lion, had donated pink helmets to our Conference, one of which they agreed should be given to Wendy. We called it the Pink Helmet of Courage. "Peanut Meets the Pigtailed Firefighter", a children's book about a little girl meeting a female firefighter, written by Mississauga Fire & Emergency Services Captain, Shelli Varela, was on display and available for purchase. It was quickly suggested that this big, colourful book become a card, signed by members and conference participants. It was filled with wonderful messages of hope and courage for Wendy, in the hopes of brightening her day.

Wendy succumbed to her illness late in 2015, but her impact on the community, her dedication to her service and legacy to the members of the 2015 FSWO Conference lives on as the first recipient of the Pink Helmet of Courage.

Sue Jones is a Fire Prevention Officer with Ottawa Fire Services and a member of the Board of Directors with Fire Service Women Ontario.

Michelle Gervais a firefighter with Timmins Fire Department, a professor with Norther College's Emergency Services program and member of the Board of Directors with Fire Service Women Ontario.

Wendy Krebsz, In Spirit Eternally



She entered the fire hall, toddler in tow with the Mom's n Tots group
She was wider eyed than the children, "The smell of the trucks" she said
"How can I drive one of these trucks she asked?" the fire chief said you have to
be a firefighter
In a brief flash her heart burned with the excitement of a herd of wild horses
She joined at the first opportunity and became "Windy Wendy" as the questions
never stopped
She knew being the first female firefighter in the fire hall was going to be tough
but so was she
First call a grass fire...she journaled "What a rush" "I smell like a camp fire"
First structure fire she's a tanker shuttle co-pilot; first MVC she is on sign duty
for traffic control
First medical, a fatality she comes home and cries and a little part of her dies inside
She wants to help more as she quickly arrives at the notion that there is more to
this firefighter job
Let's arrive with a message along with the big red trucks, prevention can be a
philosophy
The prevention role was two-fold as she grew her knowledge at OFC and at
emergency scenes
"Windy Wendy" at the fire hall became "Firefighter Wendy" at the schools and
public events
Let's have an open house, "That's not in the budget", so she raised the money
through donations
Children became "Her little peanuts" in the classrooms and she loved teaching
them to be safe
The Fire fit was a challenge too, as she put "Randy" down 4 times but picked him up 5
I passed her in the hallway at OFC, the pull was like that brief moment before
two magnets touch
I interrupted her movie in the OFC lounge...
"Hitched" would be a movie she'd never see as we turned and talked and the rest
is our history
Over the years there would be many fire calls, she'd come home and shower but a
danger lingered
"I love that smell of a job done well, what a rush to be in there doing it"

cont.

Prevention continued and so did her passion for helping people to prevent tragedy
Her place in the fire service was secure she was right where she wanted to be...

"I don't feel well, somethings not right?!" a danger lurked hid out of site
A doctor's visit reassured her plight, you need to relax its just part of the "change
of life"

Another year passed and the feeling didn't pass I came home from work to find
her in tears

To the hospital we went Emergency, as the trouble began I prayed for strength
The ER doctor assessed and ordered some tests she was not doing well and I
hoped for the best

The results were not good and Stage IV Metastatic Liver Cancer became her
new challenge

In the hospital she said "You can go, you did not sign up for this"
I called her parents and asked for permission, to take her hand as "I am signing
up for this"

I asked her in the hospital room to be my wife she said "No you're doing it out of pity"
I said "I am going out in the hallway and coming back in and I want a different answer"

We wed in the summer in a forest filled with love and family
As I helped her change and she stood in front of the mirror she cried "I'm an Alien"
No hair and half her body weight gone with IV ports hanging from everywhere
I hugged her and said "Your still my gal and your right here", my hand on her heart
We dried up the tears, her words from the beginning "Happy or Sad, Good or Bad"
She learnt to be still and be catered to, what she'd done for so many it was now her turn
She waited to see her son Owens' championship football game in November; they won

She asked that I take care of Owen, and she passed a week after the game

We shared a love for each other and a love for taking care of others

Her legacy burns in the heart of every woman that thinks they can't do it

She did it and wants everyone woman or man that struggles to draw on her
strength in their adversity

Many times she said "I want to be thinner" in hindsight be careful what you wish
for as she got thin

And above all else, find a mutual relationship; love and live with all that you've got

She wants you to ask for help, you do not have to do it alone...

Her spirit is your light in the darkness and your courage to face the next day

For You my Love, Duncan Rydall



Wendy Krebsz
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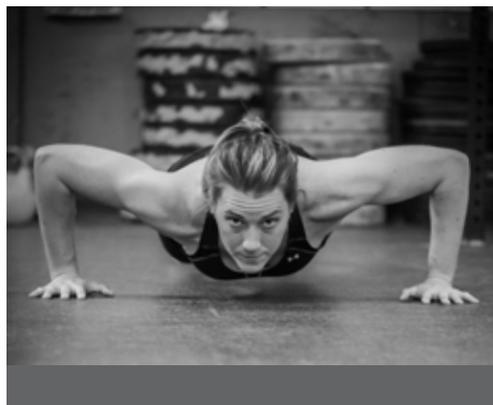
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Member Profile: Amber Bowman

interviewed by Michelle Gervais



“I would love Fit by Fire to grow and continue to help others understand fitness and health.”

AMBER IS A PROUD GRADUATE OF OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY (OSU) WHERE she achieved a degree in Exercise Science. While attending Ohio State she played on the Women’s Ice Hockey Team, achieving major accomplishments. Amber finished her career as a two time captain, the third all-time points leader for OSU defence, a four time Academic All-Big Ten and a four time OSU Scholar-Athlete. Amber went on to play in the Canadian Women’s Hockey League, finishing her elite career with the Toronto Furies and continues to play senior AA hockey with the Aurora Panthers.

Amber is currently a firefighter with Central York Fire Department of Newmarket and Aurora after working as a Fitness and Sports Supervisor with the Canadian Forces at Base Borden. Amber began her Fire Combat Challenge competitions in 2011 and was the first rookie to be victorious on the world stage. She continues to excel, conquering the Firefit all time female individual fastest time of 1:58. This makes her the first female to break the two minute barrier. Amber recently captured the 2015 Fire Combat World Championships title, making her the most victorious competitor in Fire Combat history, achieving a total of 16 World Championship Titles in only 5 years.

Fit by Fire was created in 2013 as a way to fun Amber’s Combat Challenge competitions in North America. Her friends, family, and local fitness enthusiasts were eager to try her unique style of training, after seeing her work out. People from the York Region began to join bootcamps or purchase personal training sessions with Amber, with the fees directly funding her competitions. Amber continues to help others achieve their goals and push them to new limits through mental and physical challenges.

Why did you want to be a firefighter?

I wanted to be a firefighter when I was a kid in high school, however was told it was too dangerous and they saw too many bad things. I was one of the designated Elite Trainers while working with military personnel and worked with various high profile military groups, one being the firefighter. After running a group through their annual fitness testing, a few of them were unsuccessful. The Sergeant approached me, as the designated coordinator that week, and suggested that in order to understand the firefighter fitness test and know exactly what they were going through, I must try it myself.

After a few hours of letting them cool down, I returned the facility and performed their fitness test in full gear and on air. With 7-9 firefighters, Sergeants, and Chiefs watching, I passed, and by a lot! As they stood quietly, one spoke up and said, “Wow girl, you need to be doing this as a career.” That was it... my mind was changed!

After that day, I pursued firefighting by attending the Pre-Service Firefighting program at Seneca College in 2010. Once completed, I was hired by Central York where I currently enjoy the challenges uniquely presents on every call of each shift.

cont.

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Why did you want to compete in Firefighter Combat Challenge?

I love trying new challenges and wanted something to train for after my hockey career started to slow down. I knew a friend through my massage therapist who raced in the Scott Firefighter Combat Challenges. He brought me to training one day and began teaching me about the sport and what it was. After feeling like I was going to die from physical exhaustion, I began a love-hate relationship with the sport. Training days are hard, race days are nerve racking, but the best think about it all is, all of the competitors, we feel the same.

Meeting other firefighters from around the world, travelling to new areas and countries to compete is something that only makes us better at our jobs. Not only am I able to train for something that keeps me physically fit but, overall, mentally strong. I know that when a real fire comes in at work, my physical capacity is high. What I have really learned is my limitations of my SCBA (self contained breathing apparatus) and myself. Mentally, I've learned the difference between tired and exhaustion, and I attribute that all to the Firefighter Combat Challenge.

Why did you start *Fit by Fire*?

Being a woman, sponsorship was hard to find. I contacted over 100 companies for support, set up meetings, offering exposure from the seven minutes of television airtime I've received on TSN for the past four seasons. I continuously hit roadblocks as a female athlete, so I realized I needed to come up with another method to raise the required funds. Therefore, I started my company in 2013 as my own sponsorship program. My friends, family, and local fitness enthusiasts were always eager to try my style of training after seeing me workout, thinking how unique it was. And so it started! People from around York Region began to join bootcamps or personal training sessions and in return, their fees helped me compete in the Firefighters Combat Challenge. Not only was I able to fund my-

self, I was now able to share my knowledge, experiences, and motivation with others. I want to help train, teach, and inspire my clients to reach their goals. It has proven to be a successful win-win.

I would love *Fit by Fire* to grow and continue to help others understand fitness and health. My goal is to have *Fit by Fire* become a sponsor for other female athletes in whichever sport they participate in.

How do you train?

I train very functionally, not the typical weights used in everyday gyms. I am a farm girl, so making tools to train with was what I had to do. A week for me would be a body building gym workout, functional hockey ice-off conditioning workout, some crossfit WOD's (workout of the day), fire fit tower training and back half work, followed by some track workouts or biking, the odd time I would swim. Variety is the KEY for overall health. You can't let your body know what's coming next. Change is good and variety allows your mind and motivation to remain high.

How do you balance it all?

I am a huge scheduling person who lives by her notes, calendar, and TO DO list. On a regular day I may have two or three journals that I write in, tracking and monitoring my daily activities, foods eaten, workouts completed, things to do, places to go, motivational talks scheduled, people to meet with, practices to run, plans to happen, quotes to read and share, pictures/videos to post, phone calls to make, work schedules to follow and more. Needless to say, I commit to being organized.

How do you overcome challenges?

I overcome challenges by goal setting. If you don't have goals, then what are you working towards? When I fall short of my goals, I tend to look back on what I've learned and how I could have changed it. Of course, after I have cooled down and gotten past the angry, sad, negative emotions.



Sometimes, you work really hard for a goal and it doesn't happen. Perhaps I didn't achieve a time I was aiming for during a particular race, the process however may have taught me way more than that goal actually meant. Failure is not failing, it is learning! I've learned a lot of things in my life through athletics. All good things start with BELIEVING. Believe in the process, in yourself, and in the results. Surround yourself with supporters and positivity. The older you get, the less you care about negative people or "haters". People who don't buy into your process or your beliefs, typically are jealous or can't achieve what you've set out to achieve!

*Turn the page to see a sample workout from Amber. For more information and to follow Amber's success, check out *Fit by Fire* on Facebook or at fitbyfire.com.*

.....

Michelle Gervais a firefighter with Timmins Fire Department, a professor with Norther College's Emergency Services program and member of the Board of Directors with Fire Service Women Ontario.

*Amber Bowman is a firefighter with Central York Fire Department of Newmarket and Aurora and the founder of *Fit by Fire*.*

Fit by Fire Workout

courtesy of Amber Bowman

WARM UP

- High Knee Hugs
- Shoelace Grabs (quads)
- Leg Cradles
- Walking Lunges With opposite Arm Reach
- Reverse Lunge, Elbow to Instep, Reach
- Inch worms
- Lunge Series (Forward, Lateral, Crossover)
- Quadruped Thoracic Rotation
- Hip Bridge
- Squat and hold in the bottom position for a groin stretch

Increase Heart Rate

- Jogging on the spot 15 seconds
- High knee run 20 meters
- Butt kickers – 20 meters
- Lateral Shuffle – 20 meters
- Back peddle – 20 meters

CARDIO MINI CIRCUIT

Skipping - 1 minute single skips, 30 seconds right leg, 30 seconds left leg, 30 Double Unders, Rest 1 minute

Repeat for 4 sets

Grab Water, set up Circuit 1.

Circuits- Complete each circuit FULLY before resting. Each one is to be short and a fast tempo. If you want to challenge yourself more, you can decrease your resting time, increase your weights or add in more sets.

CIRCUIT 1

- A. Olybar Split Squats
 - Keep ribs packed down, glutes tight, shoulders over hips
- B. TRX Hamstring Curls
- C. Standing Medicine Ball Overhead Wall Throw
 - You're close to the wall, when you release the ball, it will come right back into your hands, reload and throw

Reps: 15 Round 1, 12 Round 2, 10 Round 3
Rest 1 minute and Repeat for 3 Sets

CIRCUIT 2

- A. Burpee Box Jumps (10 reps)
- B. Rope Slams/MB Quick Slams (30)
- C. Farmers Walk (40 meters)

Rest 2 minutes, Repeat for 3 sets

CIRCUIT 3

- A. Battle Ropes waves
- B. Elbows to Hands
 - Push up position, drop one elbow down, the other elbow then follows, now you're on both elbows in a maintained plank position. Get back up to hands while keeping knees off the ground!
- C. Medicine Ball Wall Side Toss

Reps: 15 reps Round 1, 10 reps Round 2

Rest 2 minutes, Repeat for 2 sets

CONDITIONING

Air Dyne Bike – 8-15 kcals, Rest 1 minute x 10 sets
(You can supplement a Rowing Machine, Treadmill, Stair Climber)

COOL DOWN

20 minutes of mobility/Yoga

Refuel your Body; Hydrate as well.

EXTRA, EXTRA, EXTRA!!!

(add in after circuit 3)

Combat Challenger Circuit!

- A. Back Squats 175 lbs Males/ 100 lbs Female
- B. Jump Split Squats (20 reps)
- C. Prowler Push Forward (20 meters)
- D. Prowler pull backwards (20 meters)

Rest 2 minutes, Repeat for 2-3 sets



Interagency Coordination & Collaboration



The Movement Toward Interagency Coordination and Collaboration in the Field of Disaster and Emergency Management

by Alice Cullingford, Acting Captain,
Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services

CYBER ATTACKS, TERRORISM EVENTS, AND MAN-MADE AND NATURAL hazard-induced disasters cannot be handled with the resources from a single agency. Dozens of organizations are required to properly prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and help communities recover from disasters. As such, there is a need to move away from the traditional silos found within the public and private sector towards disaster and emergency management (DEM) practice and implementation that is more holistic and decentralized. Coordinated inter-agency and inter-governmental collaboration is key. While Canadian research on this topic is not as robust due to the relative infancy of DEM as compared to the United States, American and global research analysis is a good indicator of the direction Canada needs to move towards in the upcoming decade. Certain factors are required in DEM to achieve solid interagency collaboration, and indeed there are barriers and limitations to policy implementation. Important elements that need to be examined include visionary leadership, the building of relationships through trust, communication, communication interoperability, and agendas in policy, planning, and practice.

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COLLABORATION REQUIREMENTS

Visionary Leadership

Organizations and their leaders must be committed to having a long-term vision and create an institutional environment that fosters inter-agency and inter-governmental collaboration and coordination. Particularly within DEM there needs to be systemic acknowledgement of the vast social capital that already exists within communities. This would include the public and private sector, all tiers of government, non-government organizations, the media, volunteer groups, and the very people who make up a community. But strategies are needed to find an efficient way to tap into these resources. Understanding the need to let go of centralized governance with the move toward lateral, or bottom-up input is a sign of leadership wisdom that bodes well in disaster management situations. While it is certainly not a simple feat, disaster and emergency management leaders must forge the way to be accountable for what they do, be aware of the manner in which actions are taken, seek ways to continuously improve performance, and make behavioural changes according to the context in which they find themselves. Although there is a growing awareness of the need for a shift to occur, it will be an uphill climb requiring a tremendous amount of vision to shape the future to obtain institutional buy-in from all stakeholders.

Relationships Built on Trust

The concept of having one's back is paramount. While trust is difficult to define since it is a quality that is felt and not necessarily quantifiable, it is inarguable that people just seem to know when they feel trust. Relationships within the DEM field are inherently complex due to institutional silos, and further complicated by the interconnectedness that isn't always apparent at first glance. Therefore, the building of relationships through trust can be an intricate dance between agencies. Trust is typically built over time but can quickly be destroyed. Emergency managers and actors who play within the realm should work to gain a true understanding of how reliant people and organizations are on each other within the system, and take steps to forge solid bonds. In addition, leaders must realize that the links between all levels of government are only as strong as the relationships of the stakeholders who will be teamed together during times of duress (International Association of Emergency Management [IAEM], 2007; Wachtendorf, 2001).

Communication

The manner in which intra and inter-organizational information is exchanged makes up the communication process, and it is critical that the flow of information keeps moving through the proper channels for successful disaster and emergency management outcomes

(Kapucu, 2006). How this information is shared, and with whom is also vital. Organizations should not only exchange accurate information in a timely manner with important players, they should also be open to feedback, and be ready to plan a different course of action as necessary based on new information received. In addition, organizations should not overlook the importance of the various forms of media that are available to use since the media can be a great ally to organizations by helping to disseminate information to the public. Organizations will have different views on what is important, and managers must be aware that crucial information may inadvertently be left out that may be paramount to another agency.

9/11 was a fatal example of how the lack of inter-organizational communication and interoperability was in part caused by poor interagency relationships and inadequate technology. It is imperative that agencies (especially those in first response) have functioning interoperable handheld communication devices. Canada has not yet had its 9/11 but heed should be taken. Not only is there a lack of interoperability within emergency agencies municipally, the statistics are grim for municipalities' interoperability with its provincial and federal partners (Kenny et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, Canadian efforts have proven to be moving at a snail's pace in terms of actual progress made (Kenny et al., 2008). Ideally, a communication system would interconnect with public sector agencies such as police and fire departments, community emergency management coordinators, hospitals, and expanding groups (Kapucu, 2006). Obtaining this important goal, while not inconceivable within the next decade will be a challenge without an incredible amount of funding. Where exactly the money will come from remains unclear.

Policy, Planning, and Practice

Even in the wake of 9/11, there was an absence of a standardized process that addressed how agencies and branches of the federal government in the U.S. would operate together in the case of a disaster (Christopher, Frye, & Reissman, 2010). The Department of Homeland Security finally created the first federal interagency contingency-based plans called the National Planning and Execution System in 2006. What is troubling is that this plan was only implemented post Katrina—possibly influenced by strong public backlash against the government. North of the American border, the 2009 fall report of the Auditor General of Canada, and a report by Kenny et al. (2008) on the Emergency Management Act reflect similar disturbing insights into Canada's lessons-not-learned from disasters such as SARS, the ice storm that occurred in 1998, and the 2003 Eastern Seaboard blackout. Despite the socioeconomic impacts of these events, Public Safety Canada did not provide leadership in the development of policies and strategies for agendas critical to

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all-hazards emergency management operations coordination (Office of the Auditor General, 2009). What resulted was the development of the Federal Emergency Response Plan with positive implications whereby federal agencies are involved in the coordination and contribution to joint plans, using resources that are accessible at all tiers of government as needed (Public Safety Canada, 2014). However, plans are only as effective to the degree in which they are understood and implemented in a disaster situation. Implementation seems to be occurring slowly, and lack of coordination remains problematic that requires greater direction from the federal level.

Disasters are no longer seen as merely Acts of God but rather impacts that can be avoided with better political decisions, improved policies surrounding governance, and practices within organizations that are collaborative and sound (Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). As such, those who create disaster policy must take the lead and engage with other stakeholders when it comes to shaping and creating a climate of understanding in terms how the public views political strategies and DEM (Boin et al., 2005). Failing to shape these views will produce a void that will be filled by others, and will place policy makers in the position of having to answer to agendas that may not reflect the best interests of the public (Boin et al., 2005).

The traditional branches of the public sector are often shaped by policies that are inflexible and have operational procedures that do not allow natural flow or execution of duties (IAEM, 2007; Wachtendorf, 2001). It would thus be wise for emergency managers to develop creative approaches and plans that are innovative and adaptable when it comes finding solutions to challenges in the DEM field (IAEM, 2007). Policies and programs need to be created in a manner that is both people-centric and leader-led. Implementation and planning of policy will not be as strong if shaped at the exclusion of key stakeholders. Even within an atmosphere of a common goal or vision, it is inevitable that plans and agendas of one organization will take precedence over another's due to competing interests (King, 2007). While it is not likely that conflict can be completely avoided, the way in which matters are handled will have subsequent positive or negative outcomes.

Barriers and Limitations

Many government policies and procedures are constrained in the sense that they are particularly specific by design. While there may be political will to create more de-centralized governance in the field of DEM, consistent implementation, coordination, and sustainability of forward-thinking plans continues to be a challenge

cont.



Poor interagency relationships and inadequate technology created challenges in responding to the 9/11 attacks.



Mario Sergio, MPP York West



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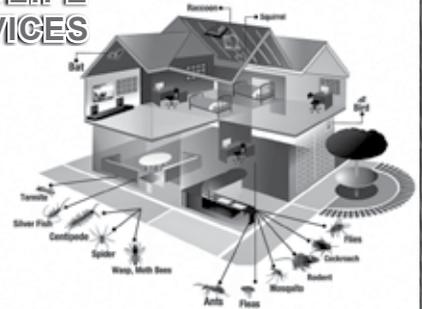


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cont.

in Canada—a country that contains a population that is socially, economically, and geographically diverse. Broad sweeping policies, or plans that may be too case specific may not be in the best interest of the public or the public sector organizations that serve them. Some deeply entrenched first responding agencies may not, for example, easily recognize or accept the importance of when to let go of command and control models and adopt newly implemented governance plans. Emergency response agencies that function and operate under paramilitary and hierarchical structures may have the hardest time adjusting. These, along with other organizations, will have to embrace a major shift and succumb to some growing pains due to the entrained nature of how business has been traditionally conducted. No doubt resistance will be met in some instances. There may be denial, and perhaps even worse, apathy.

Those at the helm of agencies must be mindful that organizational shifts will take time and buy-in, and will face cultural, legal, communication, and leadership barriers. Proactive steps must be taken to dissect the status quo and take what is working, and remove what isn't in order to shape the direction DEM needs to move toward the future.

Conclusion

While DEM leaders may be willing to move forward with inter-agency collaboration, they may lack the knowledge in how to proceed, and be constrained in their ability on how to foster a holistic environment. Organizational change requires a shift that may take five to ten years or more before the integration of strategies and plans towards a common goal becomes regular industry practice within the DEM field. But challenges in DEM should be seen as opportunities to find innovative ways to achieve strong interagency collaboration through leadership that is visionary, trust that is built through relationships prior to a disaster strike, and improvements in communication and technology that enables communication interoperability.

Agencies will not always agree when it comes to the management of disaster and emergencies. There will be competing agendas and resources, inter and intra organizational strife, and differing opinions. Because the field of DEM is dynamic and cannot be measured by a snapshot in time, definitive solutions may seem elusive. However, the dynamism is what makes the field exciting. The relative newness of the DEM field in Canada opens up many opportunities for leaders at the helm of public and private sector organizations who can shape the future direction of policy and planning. It may not be an easy road, but with clear vision and a strong mandate, interagency collaboration and coordination can, and hopefully will be achieved. The steps taken toward this goal in the next decade will be critical.



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Alice Cullingford is an Acting Captain for Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services

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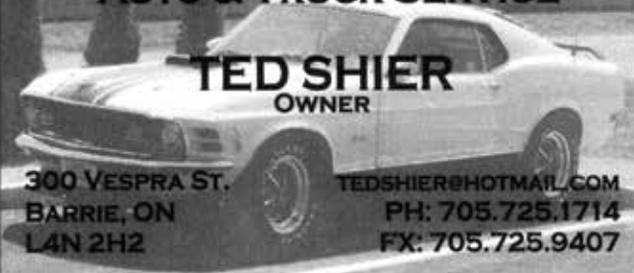
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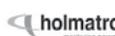
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Just Breathe

by Jim Andrews, Captain, Ottawa Fire Services



WE HAVE ALL HEARD THE EXPRESSIONS; IT TOOK HER BREATH AWAY; HE GASPED IN DIS-belief; they screamed in delight. Each speaks to a physiological response to a sudden or unexpected external stimulus. Our bodies are hard wired to respond to such events through what is commonly referred to as the fight or flight reflex. This involuntary response readies our bodies and minds to quickly assess and react to a situation. Heart rate surges, muscles tighten, breathing becomes quick and shallow; as our senses become heightened and mind races looking for a solution. Sometimes the event is only a perceived threat and our body releases the tension by laughing it off. The emotions of fear and anxiousness are very closely related to joy and exhilaration. In the emergency response community, this close relationship between fear and exhilaration is part of the satisfaction we derive from responding to emergencies; akin to the runners high.

While the fight or flight response has served the human species well over the millennia; it can have a significant impact on emergency responder effectiveness at the scene. We often respond to exceptional events which cause us to experience a significant stress reaction. Honor and our duty to help those in need, means flight is not an option. We must instead fight through the stress we experience and do our best to make a difference. It is critically important that all first responders, especially those in leadership roles, recognize the impact that our natural stress reflex has on the ability to perform under extreme circumstances.

A calm demeanor is the hallmark of a leader with “command presence”. The US military defines command presence under the doctrine BE-KNOW-DO (Pendry, 1999) In the civilian world leadership at an emergency scene quickly falls to a person willing to (BE) the leader, who is perceived to (KNOW) what to do and who takes action (DO). Establishing command presence in a formal leadership role is a more complex process by which leaders and followers establish a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. Character traits that impact on the development of this relationship (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) include:

Courage - Besides loyalty, no other character trait is more universally valued in a leader than courage. While we might think courage is about facing danger head on, it is also a measure of a leader’s willingness to make tough choices and stand up for what is right. Courage under fire has many connotations. An effective leader must be courageous in actions, words and deeds; at all times.

Technical Proficiency is the surest way to be perceived as an expert leader. In the first responder world; expert leadership is found within technicians, instructors and senior personnel with a demonstrated ability to know what to do. Formal leaders, who also possess a demonstrated technical proficiency, elicit strong loyalty from followers.

Confidence - While it is vitally important for leaders to be self confident; it is equally important that leaders convey confidence in followers. Nothing raises the stress level on an emergency scene like a leader who micro manages or questions the competence of crew members.

Decisiveness is not rash, impulsive or reactionary. It is measured, thoughtful and deliberate. First responders are programmed to take action. Leaders provide direction; direction instills purpose; purpose focuses action; and action can reduce psychological stress.

Self-Awareness - Leader’s at a critical incident must recognize their psychological and emotional reaction to the situation at hand; quickly square their own stress response (see Tactical Breathing), and provide clear direction thereby setting the tone for other responders.

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Every first responder will eventually have that call. If you are in a leadership role when you get yours, have the courage to recognize your own reactions; it's a normal response to an abnormal situation. Be decisive in assessing what needs to be done and who can be helped by quickly triaging between the dead, the dying and those that are just crying. Focus on achieving tactical priorities (Airway, Breathing, Circulation), (Life, Incident, Property, Environment). Give concise, attainable tasks to arriving responders. It's your job to keep them focused and let them know they are going to make a difference. In that moment; Be the leader; Know it's going to get better; Do what needs to be done, for you, your crew and those involved, but above all remember...BREATHE.

TACTICAL BREATHING

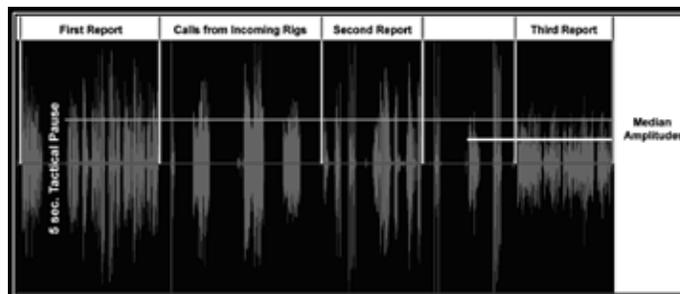
My crew and I were first due to an incident involving a double deck commuter bus and a VIA train that collided at a level crossing. On arrival we were faced with the graphic realities of a mass casualty incident. My initial report was quick and succinct, like I'd done a thousand times. I assumed command and assigned my crew the obvious tasking. Standing amongst the debris field beside the bus, I began my 2nd radio report; "Dispatch Pump 44...I have one, two" is how I started. As the words were leaving my mouth, my inside voice was screaming "STOP COUNTING, STOP COUNTING"; I was counting torsos trying to determine how many dead we had. In that instant I was profoundly aware that I was experiencing sensory overload. My training kicked in; BREATHE. I let go of the mike and took a very purposeful pause. While I continued to survey the scene, I took a deep breath, focused on the critical information that needed to be relayed, and then continued my radio report.

Tactical breathing is a technique used by law enforcement and military personnel to help focus and operate in hostile environments. It can be a valuable tool for other first responders during high stress incidents. Tactical breathing is a tool to help focus your conscious mind on what your autonomic system is doing to your body in a stressful situation, and control those reactions so that you can operate effectively. Many different techniques of tactical breathing are out there. Breathe in through the nose out through the mouth and in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, out for 5 are among the most common. The key is to find and practice and then utilize the technique that works best for you.

After the bus incident, a recording of emergency responder communications was widely shared online. The graphic below illustrating the radio traffic from initial to third report. Of particular interest is the change in the amplitude (volume) and cadence (rhythm) of each report.

- 1st Report
 - Initially extremely rapid and loud (equivalent to sirens in background of calls from incoming rigs)
 - After the tactical pause a marked definition between statements, but still very loud.

- 2nd Report
 - Still loud but more defined breath between short statements.
- 3rd Report
 - Amplitude is half that of 1st and 2nd reports.
 - Longer statements with full breaths between each one.



Taking a five second pause that morning was critical to the overall effectiveness of our response. Panic is contagious; even for first responders.

References:

Kouzes, J.M. & B. Z. Posner. 2012. The leadership challenge: how to make extraordinary things happen in organizations. A Wiley Imprint, San Francisco, CA.

Pendry, J. D. 1999. The three meter zone. Presidio Press, New York, NY.

Suggested Readings:

Abrashoff. It's Your Ship | Annis & Gray. Work With Me | Logan, King & Fischer-Wright. Tribal Leadership | Viscuso. Step Up and Lead

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Jim Andrews has held many formal leadership roles over his 26 year fire service career including Company Officer, Training Officer, and Special Team Coordinator. He is currently a Station Captain with Ottawa Fire Services and Task Force Leader of Ottawa's Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. Jim holds an Executive Diploma in Municipal Management from Western University; his thesis being Climate Change; A Transformational Leadership Model for Ottawa Fire Services.



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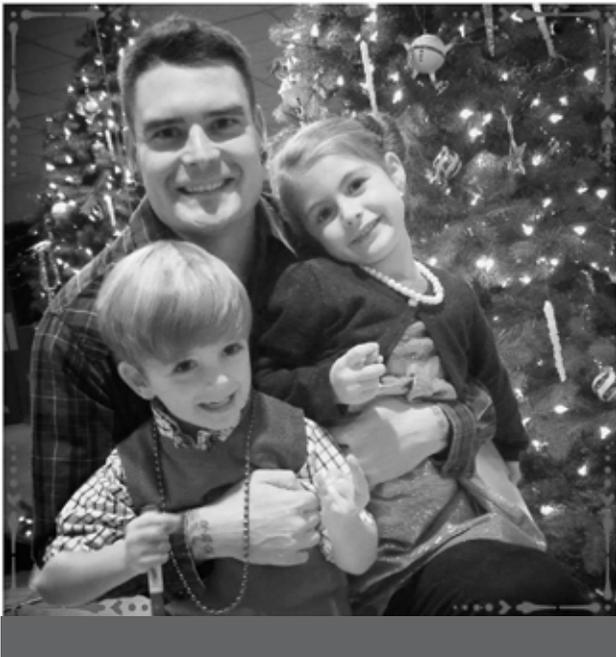
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The Motherload:

Ryan Moonlight's story, and what we can learn from it



JESSICA CLERMONT

Firefighter 7 years, Toronto Fire Services

HAVE A STORY ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, BUT IT'S ONLY PARTIALLY MINE.

The story belongs to my friend and co-worker Ryan Moonlight, who on January 23rd 2015, committed suicide. I can't tell you what was going through Ryan's mind that night, I just assume he was in pain, and the feeling of hopelessness overwhelmed him. Although Ryan's story ends tragically, I know he would want people to hear it... especially if it helped someone else. I would also like to share my crew's story of how we are coping, and what we have learned in retrospect.

Ryan's story is extensive, and I am uncertain of all the details, but can tell you some of the major ones. His battle with mental health included recovering from alcoholism, an ongoing separation from his wife, depression, and post traumatic stress disorder. I'll focus mostly on Ryan's PTSD, because that's what we witnessed first hand with him.

Ryan was sober for four years when he transferred into our hall. He was an open book, and told us everything going on in his life, good or bad. I felt like I knew everything about him after his first shift with us. It was clear to me Ryan had lots of negatives in his life, that he was struggling with. On the other hand, he also had lots of positives, and they seemed to balance each other out. I have to tell you about the positives in his life, because those are the things he was passionate about, and that's what made him smile.

First and foremost, Ryan has two beautiful children, his daughter Ella, and his son Landon. When they came to visit daddy at the fire hall, that was the happiest I ever saw him. I could see how proud he was, and I could see how much Ella and Landon not only loved their dad, but loved to be with him. One of Ryan's other passions was music. His favorite genre was hard-core, scream at the top of your lungs, rock music. I personally cannot understand what those singers are screaming about, but I know three people who can... Ryan, Ella, and Landon! I wish you could see these two kids, a 4 and 5 year old, rock out with their dad! They even sang for us at the fire hall, which included throwing up the devil horns!

The last passion of Ryan's I'll talk about is one many of us can relate to. He loved being a firefighter. For him and us, it truly is the best job in the world. Ryan had been on the job for 12 years, and was getting ready to take his captains modules. I loved that he was still keen to learn, and train. He was a great role model for young firefighters like me. One of Ryan's best character traits, which made him a great firefighter, was helping others. Not only did he help the citizens of Toronto while at work, he also helped his family and friends off the job. Ryan wrote an article in our Toronto Fire Watch magazine about his battle with alcoholism. He hoped it would help fellow members with their personal struggles. He also volunteered his time with our Employee Assistance Program. Here he could help members by listening, by being understanding, and reassuring them that they are not alone. Ryan's mom shared a quote that sums up the generosity Ryan demonstrated in his life. It says, "Good people are like candles; they burn themselves up to give others light".

We ran a call one November morning that affected Ryan. And from what I understand now, that was only one of many calls that affected him over his career. A young man in his late 20's wrapped his car around a tree. Ryan was driving that day, and when we rolled up, police and paramedics were already on scene. They were loading the patient onto a stretcher. I jumped in and held c-spine immobilization while they fastened him to the backboard. Ryan came over to help, he grabbed a bag valve mask and put it on the patient to help him breathe. We secured the patient for transport to the hospital, and off I went with the paramedics. Before I left with the ambulance, Ryan offered me his bunker coat, because mine was covered in blood. The guys told me later that Ryan tried desperately to clean the blood off my coat. The patient didn't survive, despite our efforts.

That accident happened on our Tuesday shift, which meant we were off for 5 days before our next shift. That Monday morning Ryan approached a fellow co-worker, Matt and I to talk about that call. He asked if that call bothered me at all. I replied "No, not really." He proceeded to tell us that it bothered him a lot, and he stayed in bed all week. He recalled looking into the patient's eyes, and "seeing death in them". He asked Matt and I not to tell anyone what he told us, and we didn't. We kept his secret. This is a decision we might regret for the rest of our careers.

Ryan ended his life early on a Friday morning. I received a phone call around noon that day informing



me of what happened. We were scheduled to return to work on Saturday, and we did. Although I know some who didn't think we should be at work that day, that's where I felt comfortable. I could be with the people who knew Ryan the way I did, and we would get through this together. We talked about Ryan a lot; some talked more than others. Over the next few months I could see myself, and my co-workers, go through all sorts of emotions. Some were sad, some angry, some still trying to understand. We all have our own coping mechanisms, from talking amongst ourselves, to wearing stickers on our helmets in his memory, and by taking part in a charity hockey game to raise money for his children's futures. With all the traumatic events we see as firefighters, I know this is the one that will always haunt us.

Ryan displayed some classic signs of suicide, but I never thought he would do it. I wish now that I didn't doubt him, and I wish I'd taken those signs more seriously. Maybe that wouldn't have changed anything, but I'll always wonder. Moving forward I hope the signs and symptoms of PTSD and suicide are more obvious to me, so I can help the next friend and co-worker in need. More importantly, I hope I have the courage to start that conversation with them. I recommend everyone reading this familiarize themselves with the signs and symptoms of PTSD. By doing so you could save a life one day, it could be someone on your crew, or maybe even your own.

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the motherload cont.

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MATT KERSWILL

Firefighter 5 years, Toronto Fire Services

MY NAME IS MATT AND I WAS ON THE TRUCKS WITH Ryan. He was a good friend and an inspirational firefighter. Ryan and I were close because we had many things in common. We grew up in the same area, were around the same age, had kids the same age, and went to the same crazy concerts as teenagers. Like Jess said we didn't know Ryan for too long, but Ryan was pretty good at introducing himself in a matter of minutes. He was proud of his family, proud of his career and his knowledge of it, and proud of how far he had come in his many internal battles.

Previous to Ryan I had never truly seen the effects of PTSD. As a firefighter we are supposed to be able to help anyone, and that day I found myself at a loss for words. A co-worker needed my help that day and I didn't know how to give it. I came up with all kinds of excuses for myself, like I wasn't there when it happened, I thought he was getting all the help he could get already, he has his own group of professionals to talk too. I still don't know if there is a right way to help someone in his situation but there is always a feeling of regret. PTSD is a hard thing to understand if you haven't been affected yourself. Ryan took everything personal and to heart. I am lucky enough to be able to separate work from personal, so far, so I had trouble understanding Ryan's illness.

What have I learned from Ryan? Well, I've learned that if someone like Ryan, who is an open book, can be so affected, then there are likely many more men and women dealing with PTSD and getting zero help, because they show very little outward signs. I've learned that even though people may seem to have it together on the outside they may be screaming for help on the inside. I've learned that a bad call that affects one person may be routine to another, or vice versa.

Things need to change. Professional help needs to be a standard after any questionable call. We need to make it OK to talk amongst our brothers and sisters on the job, because we all know the outside world has difficulty relating to what we see and feel. We need management to recognize that PTSD exists and is a reality for many members. There are too many tragic resolutions to PTSD and it's time to find the alternative. I think of Ryan on almost a daily basis. In my eyes he made a statement on the day of his death, change is needed. RIP brother.

BRAD BROWN, Captain

Firefighter 30 years, Toronto Fire Services

WE WALK A FINE LINE. AS A CAPTAIN WITH TORONTO Fire Service and having served for 30 years I have had many exposures as a result of this job. We are protected more now than ever before when it comes to firefighting both with our Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other tools and equipment provided to us enabling us to do the job. What is lacking however are the tools and training to deal with mental health of a colleague and/or crewmember. One of the things that makes our job tolerable is that we are given the tools and training needed to accomplish a task at hand as gruesome as it can be at times. The frustration lies with our little understanding, training, and tools needed, to deal with mental health issues.

The fine line comes into play when we are limited as to what we can do and/or tell others in an effort to help someone. Human rights play a major role in our decision-making, and limit our abilities to do what may be necessary to help out an individual. I believe Ryan's honesty and openness caught all of us off guard. He portrayed that he was in control of the issues and challenges that he faced as he spoke openly about his diagnoses, medications and treatments proving to us that he was getting help and seemed to have a handle on the many challenges that he had faced. Because the job was aware of Ryan's circumstances and Ryan was taking steps to help him, it left us not knowing what else we could do.

At the end of any training exercise you leave knowing you were able to accomplish the task at hand, you have the tools, you have the training, and you have even pre-planned ahead of time to give you the confidence that you and your crew are able to complete this task. I can't say with any confidence that my crew or myself could have done or would be able to do anything any differently if faced with the same situation again. This is one of the most troubling things that I have ever had to deal with in the 30 years I've been on this job.

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“If I could say one thing to you it would be drop the bravado and stand beside your co-workers, lend them a helping hand and be aware of the signs of PTSD.”

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SHARON MOONLIGHT

Ryan’s Mother

WHEN JESS TOLD ME THAT SHE WOULD BE WRITING THIS ARTICLE, I APPLAUD-ed her! Wow a brave thing to do. To speak for a friend who’s voice has been silenced, a Man that was an advocate for everyone and anyone with mental health issues related to addiction or PTSD or any number of mental health issues.

Ryan carried his “Customers” like flash cards in his mind and carried every victim in his heart. He reached out for help but there was a lack of understanding from the professionals, no one had walked in his shoes, there was a sense of bravado from other firefighters so most things were kept under wraps. Jess tells a story of Ryan telling her and Matt about a young mans poor decision-making who ultimately wrapped himself and his car around a tree, which lead to the loss of his life.

Ryan asked Matt and Jess not to tell anyone how he was feeling because he would be concerned about the repercussions! Not from the crew that he worked with but news travels fast and eventually lots of people would know his secret. Everyone reacts differently to each call. Some people are never affected, for some a call that is more personal can affect them, and some calls can affect everyone on involved. You are all different, from different backgrounds, from different circumstances. Sadly as humans, we don’t always have the understanding for someone that is “different” from us nor do we try.

Was this incident the one that started Ryan’s downward spiral that lead to his death, no one knows for sure. In speaking to the professionals that worked with Ryan they were so pleased with his progress in late December and early January. He was making plans for the future, actually even for the very next day.

I believe in my heart that each call, each incident builds up and remains unresolved until that one fatal moment. Do I believe that Ryan meant to do what he did? NO, it was a fatal mistake. I know if he had not been successful he would have said “What was I thinking?”He would have also been at risk of losing time with his beloved Ella and Landon and being a Fire Fighter. At that moment Ryan did what he thought was best, made a decision thinking that everyone would be better without him.

If I could say one thing to him it would be “Son, you were wrong”. Ryan’s loss has been a devastating blow to so many. He ended up the “Customer” that would haunt the first responders and all of us that were close to him.

If I could say one thing to you it would be “Drop the bravado and stand beside your co-workers, lend them a helping hand and be aware of the signs of PTSD.

Could Jess and Matt have saved Ryan, could I? I don’t think so. It was a fatal decision at 4:18 a.m. on a Friday morning. Could we all have been more aware of his cry for help, perhaps? Let’s learn something from Ryan’s passing. Don’t let the Memory of Our Amazing Ryan die in vain. **Educate yourself...be brave... say NO to the bravado!**



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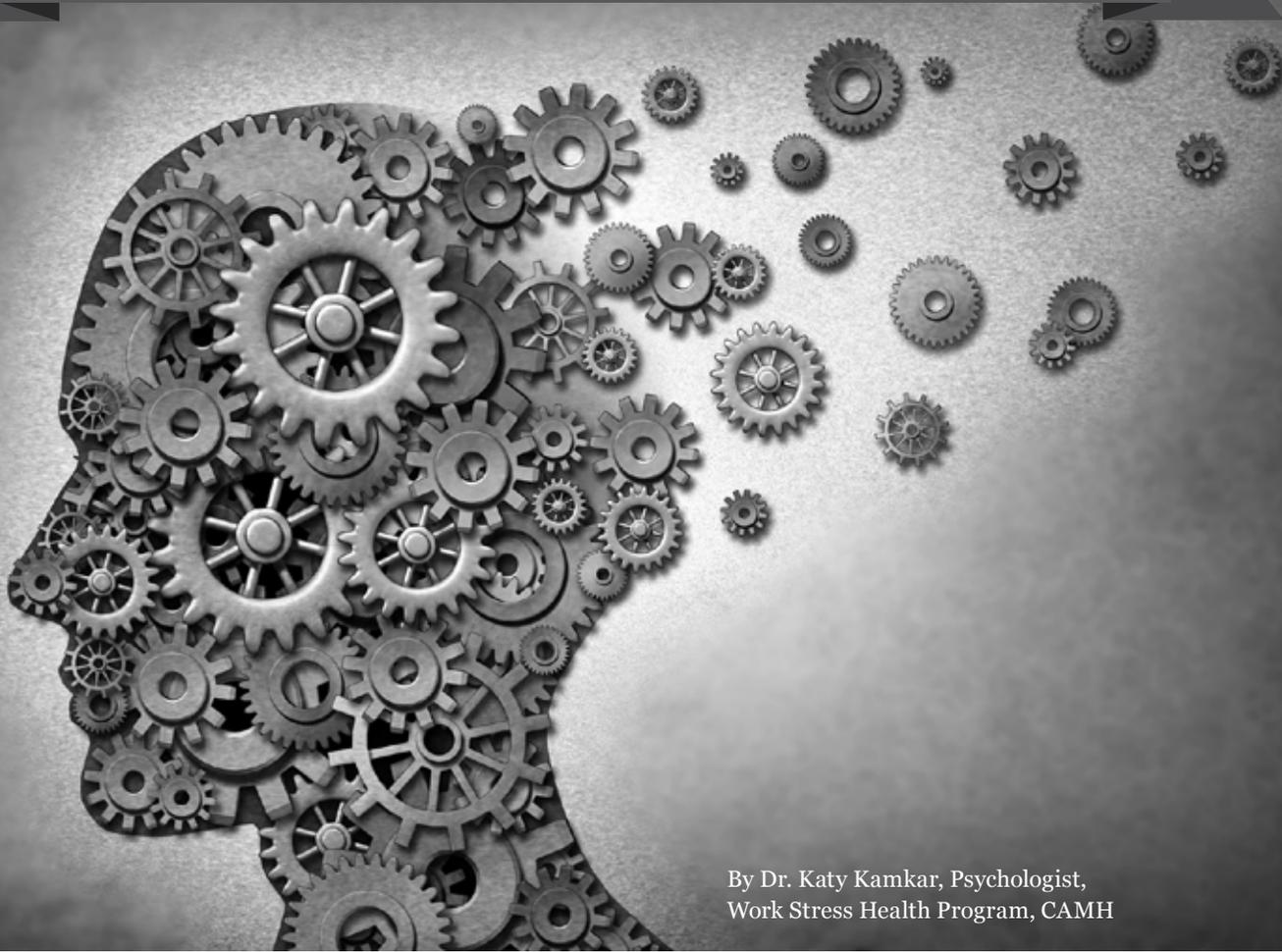
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Stigma Attached to Mental Illness



By Dr. Katy Kamkar, Psychologist,
Work Stress Health Program, CAMH



APPROXIMATELY 20% OF CANADIANS WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL ILLNESS during their lifetime. Nearly one in five Canadian adults will personally experience a mental illness during a 1-year period. No one is immune to mental health problems. It can affect anyone, including you.

People in all occupations, at all levels of education, all income levels, or cultures are affected by a mental illness. If you don't have a mental health problem, you most likely know a friend, colleague or a family member who has a mental health problem. Is this surprising? It should not be. After all, similar to mental illnesses, medical illnesses also affect anyone and we all know of someone with a medical problem.

Yet, we are facing a serious problem. It is the stigma attached to mental illness. When people have cancer, heart disease, diabetes or have chronic pain for instance, they are often likely to talk about their problems and their sufferings, to seek social support and to receive treatment. This is not the case for people who suffer from a mental illness. More often than not, the opposite is true. How often do you hear someone telling you that he or she felt so depressed such that getting out of bed was a major struggle? How often do you hear someone telling you that out of fear of being judged, he or she rarely participates in social activities or work meetings? How often do you hear of someone telling you that due to fear of being

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cont.

trapped, he or she avoids taking the subway? Yet, these are just some examples of common fears that people experience but suffer in silence.

People's attitude towards those suffering from a mental health problem is crucial. If people's responses tend to be dismissive, or if they undermine the reality of mental illness by saying things like "don't worry, relax and be happy, stop worrying, sleep well tonight and tomorrow you will feel better", you may be doing more harm than good. Those comments can lead the sufferer to suffer more in silence and be at risk of engaging in self-stigma.

Self-stigma occurs when the sufferer internalizes what others tell them, internalizes social myths and prejudices about mental illness, and begins to agree with social stereotypes. The sufferer, in turn, blames him or herself for their mental health problem. The sufferer's self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy further diminish and the recovery can become greatly negatively affected.

The stigma attached to mental illness often delays or prevents a person from seeking health care or mental health services and getting an appropriate diagnosis. It also delays or prevents receiving treatment or following up with the treatment recommendations.

The stigma also represents a serious barrier to acceptance in the community. People isolate themselves from the community and their social support groups.

In addition to home, the workplace plays a significant role in our health and well-being. Mental illness is associated with decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, short term and long term disability. Thus, creating a safe and healthy workplace environment is essential.

Education, increasing knowledge of mental health issues and talking about mental health are important to reduce the stigma of mental illness. Encouraging people to seek professional care and providing support and acceptance are essential.

Mental illnesses can be treated effectively. Don't suffer in silence. Seek professional care if you need it.

.....
Dr. Katy Kamkar, Ph.D., C. Psych., is a Clinical Psychologist at the Work, Stress and Health Program/Psychological Trauma Program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). She is also an Assistant Professor within the Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto.

***Saying things like
"don't worry" or
"tomorrow you'll
feel better" can
do more harm
than good.***



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The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services

The Other Side of the Emergency



by Sue Jones with Craig Dunbar and Melissa Donaldson

THE SALVATION ARMY IS A RECOGNIZABLE NAME IN MANY COMMUNITIES throughout Canada, but few know of the many services this organization provides. One such program is the Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) program. Many first responders will recognize their Canteen Services, making sure crews have nourishment and hydration during a prolonged emergency scene, but many first responders will only know the other half of this effort by hearing, “Is Victim’s Services required?” After the response to that question, few are aware of what this group then offers. When you picture an emergency scene, or see one covered by local media, you will envision fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars. The EDS response vehicles, when required, will be on scene to take care of the other side of the emergency.

The Program Coordinator, Craig Dunbar, is familiar with both sides of emergency response, as he is also a suppression firefighter with Station 64 in Carp, with Ottawa Fire Services. He has been involved with the organization for nearly five years. As a firefighter, he was always interested in

cont.

salvation army cont.

Craig Dunbar & Melissa Donaldson help people through the EDS program.



cont.

the support services offered to clients “after the fire” and when health issues took him away from active firefighting duties he did some research and found that volunteering with Salvation Army would allow him to continue to assist residents in their time of need.

Melissa Donaldson, is a student at the University of Ottawa and became interested in volunteering with EDS when she first heard about it at Camp FFIT (youth firefighting camp for young women in Ottawa) from a fellow camp participant and current EDS volunteer, Megan Berardelli. Melissa initially became involved hoping it would help with her journey to become a firefighter. She started as a junior volunteer and quickly moved up to senior volunteer and is now the leader of Team Delta. Melissa quickly recognized the value of the EDS program and learned a great deal about working with “the people side” of Emergency Services.

In Ottawa, the Canteen Services team is comprised of members from the Retired Ottawa Fire Fighters Association (ROFFA) and other EDS volunteers. These members provide hot meals, snacks, and hot and cold beverages at the scene from a fully equipped food services vehicle. Many of these members are also trained PTSD counsellors. This team responds not only to fires, but other emergency situations where first responders have been on scene for an extended period of time, such as the shooting that took place at the War Memorial and Parliament Hill in October, 2014.

The Salvation Army Victims Services team offers assistance to individuals affected by fires, floods, and disasters through emotional support during and after the emergency and tangible items to help them get through the time immediately following. The EDS Victims Ser-

vices vehicle is a refurbished ambulance donated by the City of Ottawa and carries items such as clothing, blankets, snacks, drinks, socks, hats, gloves/mittens, diapers, hygiene kits, and baby onesies to meet immediate needs. Other items offered are clothing, furniture, and bed vouchers, as well as Loblaws gift cards. All are issued dependent on each client’s needs. Clients are also guided through “next steps”, such as contacting insurance companies, helping to organize available emergency funding, psychological support, family counselling, housing support, Community Family Services, as well as any other required services. It is common to see the EDS unit on scene of fires, but they can also assist Ottawa Police Services with Victim Crisis Units calls, as well as assisting evacuees of Northern Communities during flood season, such as during the Kashechewan Flood in 2014.

When asked what differences he sees between emergency response as a firefighter and as a member of EDS, Craig instead first sites the similarities. “Both organizations have similar goals as both groups’ intervention is meant to help people on what is likely their worst day.” The difference is that emergency crews work to minimize the loss and damage and to protect and save lives where as EDS provides direct support to begin the recovery process. The organizations connect during item retrieval; working to collect valuables, medications, documents, etc that are left at the home and return them to the clients. Emergency Services works on managing the emergency scene, EDS’s focus is to manage their clients. As a volunteer with EDS, and candidate on the hiring list with Ottawa Fire Services, Melissa knows being a part of this organization will help improve her skills in the future as a firefighter. She has gained great experience and firsthand knowledge of emergency scene management, but most importantly, knows what is important to the individuals involved, and their needs.

The work is hard, the hours can be long and unpredictable, many times in the middle of the night, but it can also be highly rewarding. Craig sites a fire in April 2015 on Deerfield Ave as a testament to the program’s abilities. It was a fast moving, wind driven fire that destroyed a 30 unit complex, leaving more than 70 people homeless. Between EDS, Red Cross and the landlord, Minto Homes, all but a few were relocated within hours, provided with hotel rooms and essential needs until a more permanent solution could

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cont.

be arranged. On a personal level, Craig recalls a fire where a single family home was destroyed. When the team arrived a family of four, mom with her two sons and a daughter, were inside their neighbours' house, devastated and unsure what to do. While team members worked with the family, Craig went to the truck and brought back a bin containing socks, hats, gloves, and mittens for the kids to choose from, as they were all in pyjamas and bare feet. The young girl had been very emotional and was arguing with her mother until she saw a pair of fuzzy, colourful socks. She was reassured that she could take anything she wanted from the bin. Craig recalls, "Her face lit up, she put on the socks and started dancing around the house showing the socks to her family and the neighbours. That touched me and stayed with me as a wonderfully heart warming moment."

Melissa finds the experiences rewarding, as she can see the relief on their clients' faces when they arrive. "We help people of all ages and cultures, as well as people in all different kinds of situations. It's an amazing feeling, leaving a scene and knowing you've just helped someone on one of the worst days of their lives." She finds the work with their clients the most rewarding, but states the look on the exhausted firefighters' faces when she hands them a hamburger and hot coffee is a close second. Melissa says, "I'm proud to be a volunteer with EDS and seeing that I'm making a difference in my community makes crawling out of bed for 3am calls, in the dead of winter, worth it."

Ottawa Emergency Disaster Services team is always looking for talented volunteers. You can contact Craig Dunbar for more information: craig_dunbar@ottawaboothcentre.org

Toronto Emergency Disaster Services team is actively recruiting for their team. You can contact Mark Evans for more information: mark_evans@can.salvationarmy.org

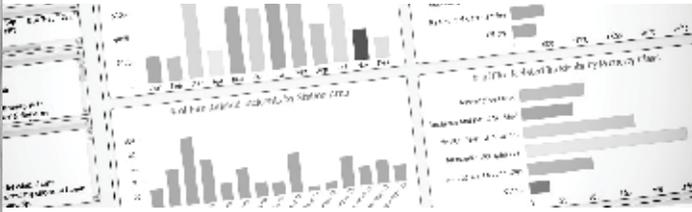
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Sue Jones has been with Ottawa Fire Services for ten years, and became a Fire Prevention Officer in January of 2015. Sue also serves on the Board of Directors of Fire Service Women Ontario as the Editor.

Craig Dunbar has served with Ottawa Fire Services for 21 years and is the Program Coordinator for the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services.

Melissa Donaldson is entering her fourth year at University of Ottawa, completing a Bachelor of Arts Double Major with Honours in History and Psychology and serves as a Group leader with Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services.



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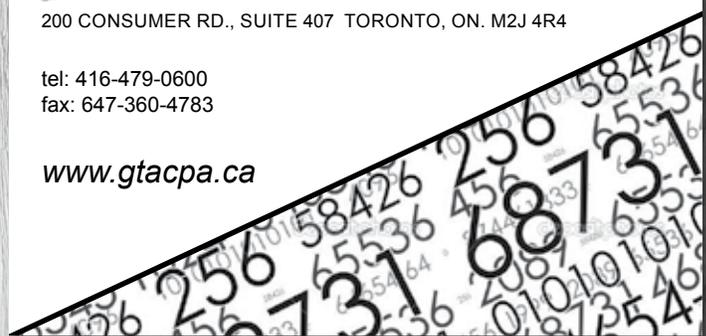
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Prevention Division – Special Programs

by Sue Jones and John Gillissie



FIRE SERVICES ARE WELL KNOWN FOR THE SUPPRESSION activities; responding to fires, motor vehicle collisions, medical calls to assist paramedics, and other emergency and non-emergency calls. Other well known divisions include Communications, where emergency calls from the public are handled, and Training Division, where new recruits are trained to be firefighters and ongoing training of fire service personnel is developed and carried out. A somewhat lesser known division is the Prevention Division. The Prevention Division in many departments is comprised of Fire Investigators, Fire Inspectors, and Public Educators, with most members taking on more than one portfolio. Investigations are completed after fires to determine the origin and cause. Inspections are done on a routine basis, or after a complaint. Public Education is an ongoing means of preparing the public for an emergency and helping to prevent them.

Ottawa Fire Services' Public Education team has many programs ranging from school age to older adult fire safety presentations, fire extinguisher training, college/university residence safety, and Wake Up program (door to door smoke alarm campaign), performed in partnership with the Suppression division. Special programs are also undertaken with groups such as Children's Aid Society, Ottawa Community Housing, Ottawa's Food Bank Programs, and English as a Second Language Programs. We feel it is important to always update and remind the public with fire safety messaging, as it's something that is not necessarily seen as affecting our everyday lives.

In January of this year, Fire Prevention's Public Education team joined forces with firefighter Alex **Audi** and together embarked on a project to bring Fire safety messaging to Syrian refugee families being welcomed to Ottawa during the Canadian government's resettlement efforts. After a discussion with our Management team, I was asked to research how the Ottawa Fire Service could go about educating our newest residents and my first stop was the main dormitory for Ottawa's main resettlement agency. I was put in touch with one of their workshop organizers and we decided that including Ottawa Police Services and Ottawa Paramedic Service would be best to maximize the time of the Settlement Agency and the Syrian families, resulting in a 2 hour Tri-Service workshop. The workshop includes basic fire safety, how, when and why to call 9-1-1, personal safety, cultural differences and expectations, and offering a positive experience with three of Ottawa's uniformed services.

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special programs cont.



We formed a team with Paramedic Superintendent Deanna Schofield and Paramedic Goran **Mevic**, who also arrived in Canada as a refugee from the former Yugoslavia as a child, and Cst. Lila **Shibley** from the Diversity and Race Relations division of Ottawa Police, led by Staff Sergeant Dave Zackrias, as well as help from Cst. Mohamed Amouni and Cst. Ali Toghrol. Firefighter Alex Audi delivers the Fire Safety presentation in Arabic, and assists Paramedic Service with their information, as well as helping Ottawa Police to answer questions in Arabic.

The Refugees come from varying backgrounds, mostly middle class families, many using their savings to escape war torn Syria, arriving in Refugee camps where they have lived for 3 and 4 years. They are aware of the basic fire safety messages, but as with all presentations, they were reminded of the importance of testing smoke alarms, having a meeting place and being aware of both the dangers of Carbon Monoxide and the new legislation governing the installation and maintenance of the CO alarms.

Presentations have been delivered to over 400 adults, and the team has met approximately 150 children. In the temporary housing, the children are set up with a play room during the presentations, but the curious come to build cardboard ambulances with those not presenting and show us the English words they have learned. All of the children are given Sparky Fire Safety colouring books and crayons which have proven to be a big hit; some of the older kids are using them to learn English and French words.

The OFS has presented in all of the temporary housing locations and will return for future presentations to newcomers. We have also met with the families who had already moved into local communities throughout the city, giving kitchen bags, containing pot holders, a bast-



ing brush, chip clip and fridge magnet, all containing fire safety messaging, as well as our Wake Up handout and the OFMEM's home checklist, both printed in Arabic.

The experience has been incredible. It's interesting to meet people with whom you do not share a language. You get an opportunity to really experience the importance of non-verbal communication. At every workshop, there were individuals, adults and children, who were very eager to help us set up and pack up our equipment, and at the hotels, the children were eager to be in our presence, putting together paper model ambulances provided by the paramedics, and showing us the English they've been learning. The questions generated through these presentations showed a great understanding and appreciation for importance of the messaging.

With an incredible response from area schools, churches, libraries, and partner organizations, we look forward to keeping up this new relationship with the Settlement Agency to spread to the messages of Fire Safety to people newly arrived to our community.

.....
Sue Jones has been with Ottawa Fire Services for ten years, and became a Fire Prevention Officer in January of 2015. Sue also serves on the Board of Directors of Fire Service Women Ontario as the Editor.

John Gillissie is an Assistant Deputy Chief with Ottawa Fire Services, overseeing Fire Prevention and Community Standards. He has been with Ottawa Fire Services for more than 25 years.



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Why Is It So Hard To Get Hired?

by Kory Pearn

WHY IS IT SO HARD TO GET HIRED BY A FIRE DEPARTMENT? There are a number of reasons why it's a challenge to get hired and because of all these reasons and variables, applicants must overcome tremendous odds. Successful applicants must remain focused throughout the entire recruitment process and make sure that they are getting accurate information the first time.

I will lay out a few common reasons why it's so difficult to get hired, but remember, at the end of the day someone has to get hired and it could just as easily be you over someone else. Don't be discouraged when pursuing this amazing career, just make sure you do everything you can and take full advantage of every opportunity during each step of the hiring process.

There are three main reasons why it is so hard to get a job on a fire department:

1. Interest level: Fire fighting is appealing to many people because of low education requirements (usually secondary school diploma or equivalency), pensions upon retirement, as well as great pay and flexible schedules. Fire fighting also attracts individuals who are interested in the thrill of handling hazardous situations under extraordinary circumstances and those who want active rolls helping their communities.
2. Limited job opportunities: Unfortunately the number of applicants applying far exceeds the number of available jobs.
3. Extensive qualifications of the competition: Not every applicant gets hired on the first attempt, and sometimes it takes years before a job offer is presented. Over time, some applicants are able to obtain extensive qualifications in order to widen the gap between themselves and those who are just starting to pursue a firefighting career.

Fire departments know that when the time comes to recruit firefighters, they are going to be overwhelmed with applicants who have impressive resumés and qualifications. Applicants will try to impress those who are involved with the recruitment selection process in an attempt to get an interview or possibly a job offer.

Candidates who have just the minimum requirements posted by the fire department will not likely get the job. The applicants are actually the ones who set the minimum standards and qualifications, not the recruiting fire departments. Every applicant is thinking the same thing, "I have to be better than every other applicant." Candidates, therefore, have taken courses and gained skills in order to improve their chances. For you to stay competitive with these applicants, you have to achieve equivalent or better skills.

If you are just beginning to pursue a career in fire fighting then your priority is to obtain all of the prerequisites before you can even consider applying to fire departments. Prerequisites are in place

because fire departments don't have time to teach every new recruit how to do basic job skills. Another reason for prerequisites is so that recruiting fire departments can determine candidates' interest in the fire service as well as fundamental skills and commitment. Once you have obtained all of the prerequisites, your priorities can switch to creating depth in all areas of your resumé.

Since every applicant raises the bar, when does it end? When does anyone sit back and say, "I have enough qualifications and I'm not going to take anymore courses or schooling?" The truth is nobody does and fire departments aren't going to do anything about it because they're recruiting firefighters who have extensive training and qualifications.

If you have been applying to fire departments for a while, have passed the written aptitude test as well as the required physical fitness test and you are not receiving interviews, then chances are you don't have enough qualifications or your resumé is weak. Remember that fire departments review hundreds, sometimes thousands, of resumés during each recruitment. Imagine what they do when they come across a resumé that is confusing to read or follow. Having a resumé that is well written and properly formatted with no spelling errors can mean the difference between getting an interview or being overlooked. Pay close attention to detail and follow-up on the reasons why you didn't get an interview so next time it's you they are calling.

If you have been interviewed by several fire departments and you have not received a job offer, you either have to work on your interview skills or there is something about you that is causing them to see a red flag (it could be a criminal offence or they think you're being dishonest with them or they may find you arrogant or cocky.) This is something you are going to have to find out. If you are receiving interviews then it indicates that you are definitely qualified – fire departments are impressed with your resumé enough to give you a chance at an interview – so stop focusing on taking courses and start focusing on your interview skills. There are already enough reasons why it's hard to get hired by a fire department so don't give them anymore. Try to keep your nose clean, visit the fire departments and remember you have to give fire departments reasons why they should hire you, not why they shouldn't.



.....
Kory Pearn has been a firefighter with St. Thomas Fire Department for 12 years.



On-boarding New Recruits Can Help Change Fire Service Culture

CHANGE IS NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD. QUITE OFTEN, people are resistant to change and in fact will not change until the consequence of not changing is worse than the change itself. Change is not what happens; it is how it is done. To illustrate, change is coming to the fire service. While, some may argue it is already here, the service will have to look outside of itself to prepare for what may come.

Probably the most significant change that has already started to take place is in the shift from a culture of risk taking to one which more closely resembles a safety culture. No longer are firefighters willing to give everything when there is nothing to save. Firefighting is becoming smarter with the adoption of more science-based techniques while moving further away from the original firefighting moniker established almost 300 years ago by Benjamin Franklin.

Fast, get to the fire as fast as possible.

Close, Effective firefighting dictated that firefighters had to be as close as possible.

Wet, get as much water on the fire as possible.

With the transition from the traditional methods of firefighting and the shift of the fire service culture, there will be a need to begin adopting practices which the private sector and many parts of the public sector are already utilizing. This will foster a working environment that entrenches the idea of safety over risk. One of the many tools those sectors are using to better teach the organization's values and culture is on-boarding.

On-boarding is not a new concept in the business world, it's being used more often to engage and inform newly hired recruits into the culture of the workplace. Even the term "on-boarding" is self-explanatory as it implies getting the new hire on board, rather than the old approach of "When they are here long enough they will know!" It goes beyond simple orientation; it familiarizes the new hire with the culture and the goals of the organization. It has also been proven that when a new hire is on-boarded they feel more valued and can be truer to those values which leads the employee to better express themselves and ask more questions. When an employee is more comfortable speaking up, the organization gets more out of the them, through better collaboration, increased information transfer, and articulation or a broader spectrum of ideas and knowledge. (Cable, Gino, and Staats, 2015)

cont.




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onboarding cont.



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There has been a lot of discussion in the past several years about the risk taking culture of the fire service and how it needs to be moved towards a safety culture. We are seeing discussions on occupational stress/critical incident stress through to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), zero tolerance policies on wearing seat belts, and more driver training, which are all shifts in the direction of safety, but as a service we seem slow to adopt these principles on the fire ground. The National Fallen Fire Fighter's Foundation (NFFF) has developed 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiative's (FLSIs) the first being: "Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety; incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability, and personal responsibility." (NFFF, 2011) This FLSI is not only putting the responsibility of safety on the leaders and managers, but by stating that it is also a personal responsibility, it puts the onus on all fire service members, from the Chief right down to the new recruit. This is further reinforced by the fourth FLSI which is: "All firefighters must be empowered to stop unsafe practices." (NFFF, 2011)

For most departments today when a new recruit is hired, they are put through a rigorous training program for several weeks or months then are assigned to their first crew. Historically it is the attitude of this crew that will shape how the recruit sees the culture of the department. This exposure may very well shape the attitude of the recruit

for their entire career. If this crew displays attitudes and behaviours that are not in line with the culture that fire service leaders have established, the recruit may eventually adopt unwanted behaviours. (Baigent et al., 2007)

The alternative to this is having an on-boarding program in place for the recruits during their initial training. When a new and more senior hire [who exemplifies the desired personnel] are paired together, the new hire is better able to express their unique perspective and past experience. Therefore, they start to feel valued and more engaged and less likely to absorb poor examples of behaviour that leads to risk taking. Having a new recruit paired up with someone that understands and reflects the culture and reflects the values and goals of the organization can ultimately and positively alter the career of that firefighter.

A report written in collaboration between the Surrey Fire Services and the University of Fraser Valley illustrates several contributing factors to the risk taking culture and identifies how the service can move more towards a culture of safety. Cited in the paper is Situational Awareness, which is the perception of the event, comprehending what is happening and predicting what will happen which is often times thwarted by the fire service culture. Two of the four dimensions brought forward in the paper are hero-orientation and veteran centric milieu. (Dow et al., 2013)

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onboarding cont.

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Hero-orientation is the perception in the media and the public that those people in the fire service are risk takers, who we are willing to lay down our own lives for strangers. (Dow et al., 2013) Al Brunacini former Fire Chief of the Phoenix Fire Department points out that it doesn't matter how a person dies in the line of duty, either free-lancing or trying to save a life, they are given the same heroes funeral. (Brunacini in FEMA, 2015) These influences shape who we hire because the people applying to the fire departments have been primed to share the same values with other fire service members. One tool to stop this revolving door is the use of on-boarding. A solid on-boarding program at the recruit level can start to change the culture in the fire service from the bottom up. It has been shown that firefighters who identify themselves as heroes are more likely to become risk takers, whereas firefighters that are socialized as public servants don't. (Dow et al., 2013) On-boarding a new recruit into the service with the correct messages will go a long way towards establishing a career focused more around intelligently cautious over boldly aggressive.

Veteran centric milieu on the other hand equates experience with power, when this happens in complete isolation of any other inputs it eventually undervalues knowledge. (Dow et al., 2013) The fire service is a highly competitive workplace to access. Recruiters and Human Resources staff are seeing a vast increase in applicants who have post-secondary education pre-service training, and more work and life experience. The fire service needs to catch up with the changing demographic of their recruits. They are hired because of the skills and knowledge they bring to the job but when a veteran centric milieu exists, those new hires can feel undervalued and are forced to fit into a culture that may rely on traditions and outdated technology and techniques. On the other hand, if that recruit is on-boarded and allowed to express their opinions and is empowered to use their knowledge they will become more engaged, feel more valued and less likely to adopt a culture that doesn't fit with where the fire service is heading.

On-boarding new recruits during their initial training will compliment a fire administration's top down approach to changing the culture within their department. Used in any organization, on-boarding introduces a new hire to the goals, values, assumptions, beliefs and culture of their new workplace. Within the fire service, it can be used towards changing how a service functions within a culture of safety and not risk taking. It empowers the new recruits to feel more valued and that their knowledge and experience is welcomed. They are there to serve the public, and not take unnecessary risks, and when the

Chief states that everyone has a voice, an opinion and a right to express it, they welcome it.

The other ironic, yet powerfully simple item that happens by the adoption of a system of effective on-boarding is that it actually reduces the top level leadership issues. When new hires get the proper culture and operations at the front end, there are fewer performance issues, conflicts and other problems which then become a concern of the leadership. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!



Lydia Wilcox has been a firefighter with Kitchener Fire Department for eight years and serves on the Board of Directors of Fire Service Women Ontario.

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Becoming a Member of an Organization

by Deryn Rizzi, Deputy Chief, Vaughan Fire & Rescue Service

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSIMILATION IS THE PROCESS OF AN EMPLOYEE BECOMING A MEMBER of an organization (getting hired) and fitting in (being accepted as a member of the team). Getting hired is one of the biggest challenges of the fire service, and landing a job is like winning the lottery.

The fire service has an intensive multi-stage hiring process, which generally involves a written exam, a physical test and multiple rounds of interviews. This stringent selection process not only helps the fire department choose the most mentally and physically fit candidates, but it also eliminates those candidates who are not completely committed.

In my role as Deputy Chief, I have had the opportunity to participate on a number of different hiring and promotional boards; from firefighter, training officer, to fire prevention inspector, along with key management positions within the City of Vaughan. I find it fascinating how each and every potential candidate presents them self, in their cover letter, their CV and in the interview. During interviews, some candidates are so focused on staying on a specific path or message that veering away from the prepared answers sends the candidate into a downwards spiral. There are those who aren't prepared enough and who clearly didn't do any research about the position or the organization. There are those that speak from the heart, and are well prepared. Then there are those who play "beat the sheet," and rate high in terms of the scoring system, but leave the selection board wondering who the person really is, and what they truly have to offer.

What is it that the selection board is looking for in a candidate, you may wonder? When a fire department hires an employee, it is usually with the assumption that the individual will be with the organization until retirement. While most organizations have a probationary period, it is difficult to terminate an employment contract once someone is hired. Therefore the selection board won't take a chance on a candidate; they need to be confident that the candidate is the right person for the job. Regardless of how high the candidate may score on a written test, or how physically fit they may be; the interview is usually the most difficult filter in the hiring process for the candidate.

Interviews are designed to determine who would best fit into the culture of the organization. Assimilating into an organization involves acquiring knowledge about how to perform duties and how to fit into the new environment.

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becoming a member cont.

cont.

The potential candidate must be able to demonstrate he/she has sought information, display acceptable values, motives and abilities, and secured the knowledge that will help him or her in mastering the necessary job skills and responsibilities of their role. In order to cross the inclusionary boundary from outsider to insider, the potential employee must demonstrate that they are aware of and share organizational norms, goals and values. Why is this important? Assimilation is defined as a mutual acceptance: a newcomer accepting the organization and his/her roles in it, and the organization accepting the newcomer. Studies have shown that an employee who does not conform to the organization's established norms are typically not accepted by their fellow employees, making assimilation less likely; which is detrimental to working collectively in a team environment like the fire service. Fitting in is the toughest obstacle for the probationary firefighter.

The interview panel / selection board does as much research about the candidate as possible prior to making a job offer. The Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that former employees can sue ex-employers for statements that impair an individual's employment prospect; therefore the organization may place less weight on reference checks. To counter this, the candidate should provide letters of reference from former employers, volunteer work, and members of the community in good standing in the application package to bolster the first impression and to increase the possibility of being selected for an interview.

Candidates should not discount the fact they may also be looked up online. In this day and age there are a lot of ways to present oneself to the world, a phenomenon called personal branding. Personal branding, by definition, is the process by which we market ourselves to others. When I was hired as the Deputy Chief at the seventh largest fire service in Canada from the rank of Captain, I knew people would wonder who I was and how I got there. At the time I had no real internet or social media presence (Facebook, twitter, or blog posts), so I created a LinkedIn page. It was the best way to control the information publically available about my professional experiences, personal achievements and my academic background. I knew I needed to strategically guide and cultivate my personal brand, so that it was representative of how I wanted others to perceive me, or ultimately it would be defined for me.

If you are applying for a job or a promotion, it is a good idea to audit your online presence. Google yourself in order to determine what information is out there about you and what photos you are tagged in. Many of the firefighter candidates have grown up in a day and age where oversharing on the internet is common place, and managing their digital footprint when searching for a job becomes quite a challenge.

The fire service branding (the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that commonly unite its employees) is displayed publically through methods such as a written motto and mission statement, postings



An interview panel including Rizzi, second from right

on Twitter, and published annual reports. As I reviewed resumes from potential firefighters in our firefighter candidate pool, it was evident that some of the candidates had done their homework. The Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service has tweeted, written articles and made speeches about being the first fire service in the Province of Ontario to have all of its members certified to NFPA 1006 chapter 5. Some astute candidates highlighted these newly attained skills in their resume. A candidate can determine what characteristics and skills the interviewer is looking for by how the department publically shares what they value, and the candidate should incorporate these sought-after characteristics into their cover letter, resume and interview responses.

The process of organizational assimilation is extensive and begins prior to submitting an application to the fire service, by socializing oneself about the culture of the organization to be hired. A potential candidate continues the process by preparing mentally and physically for testing prior to employment, and learning the technical skills necessary to becoming a firefighter. Once on the job, the firefighter continues the process of assimilation through hard work; performing tasks skillfully, building trust, and demonstrating confidence in the ability to preform professionally in an emergency situation, thus earning a good reputation and accepting the fire service family.

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Deputy Chief Deryn Rizzi of Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service is a PhD candidate at York University; her doctoral work supplements a master's degree in disaster and emergency management from York and bachelor of education and bachelor of arts degrees from Queen's University.

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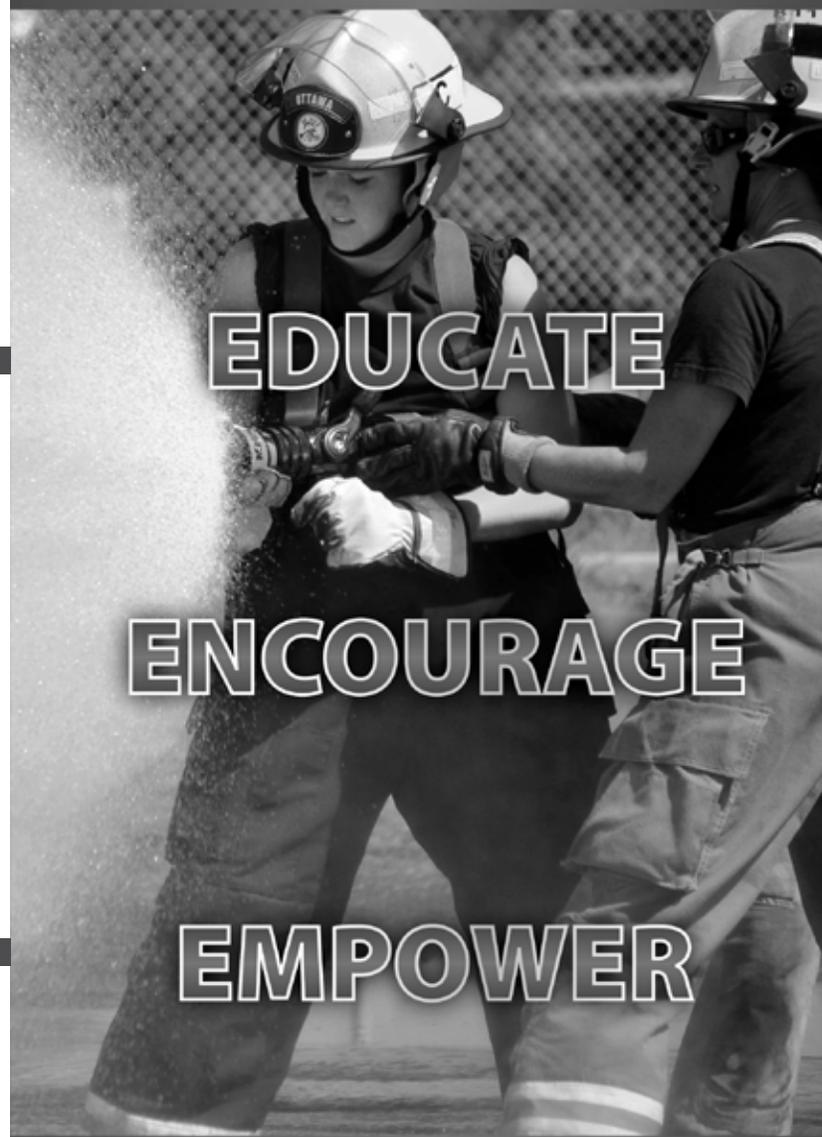
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