



MHSC Letter for Suicide Prevention Awareness Week:

As we observe Suicide Prevention Awareness Week, the NWCG Mental Health Subcommittee wants to extend a message of hope and connection to the wildland fire community. We recognize the unique challenges and profound demands of your work, and we stand with you, knowing we are stronger together in fostering a culture of support, understanding, and resilience.

The wildland fire is a family, bound by shared experiences, immense courage, and an unwavering commitment to protecting our lands, communities, and each other. The wildland fire community faces challenge every day on and off the fireline. These challenges are best faced together, drawing on strength and resources from the community.

Suicide Prevention Awareness is about taking steps to connect and support. These steps include the everyday interactions that provide connection and strengthen communities. They also include creating pathways for those in need to community get the necessary help.

The NWCG Mental Health Subcommittee would like to challenge everyone this September to take some time to explore the following ideas and actions during Suicide Prevention Awareness Week (and beyond):

Stronger Together: Remember that you are never alone. Reach out to your crew members, your leaders, your friends, and your family. Share your stories, your struggles, and your triumphs. Lean on each other, listen actively, and offer a helping hand. A simple check-in can make a world of difference.

Connection to Self: Amidst the intensity of your work, it's crucial to also connect with yourself. Pay attention to your own well-being – your thoughts, your feelings, and your physical health. Recognize the signs of stress, fatigue, or emotional strain. Take the needed steps toward wellness and balance.

Supporting One Another: We all have a role to play in preventing suicide. Be observant of those around you. If you notice a change in behavior, withdrawal, or expressions of hopelessness in a colleague, friend, or family member, don't hesitate to reach out. Express your concern, listen without judgment, and encourage them to seek help. Sometimes, simply knowing someone cares can be a lifeline.

Learn to Connect: Talking about suicide or emotions can feel uncomfortable, especially if you weren't raised in a culture that encouraged those conversations. You're not alone—many want to help but aren't sure how. These are skills you can learn. Simple actions like asking "How are you, really?" or offering to talk can make a difference. Being present matters more than saying the "perfect" thing.

Strength is Asking for Help: It can be difficult to admit when you're struggling. However, we want to state that **asking for help is not a weakness; it is a profound act of courage and strength.** It shows self-awareness, a commitment to your own well-being, and a belief in the power of collective support. There are resources available, and people who are ready and willing to provide the support you need. Whether it's talking to a spouse, family member, friend, peer, mental health professional, or a trusted leader, taking that step is a testament to your resilience.

With gratitude and unwavering support, Stronger Together,

The Mental Health Subcommittee

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SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE