



To: Wildland Fire Community

From: Alyssa Givens, Chair, NWCG Health and Wellness Subcommittee (HWSC)

Subject: 2026 Suicide Prevention Awareness Week

This Suicide Prevention Awareness Week, the NWCG Health and Wellness Subcommittee (HWSC) reaffirms its support for the wildland fire community and the importance of looking out for one another. This year's theme, "Changing the Narrative on Suicide," calls on all of us, as individuals, crews, and a broader fire community, to strengthen how we talk about mental health and support one another through challenges. Suicide leaves a lasting impact on our community. Prevention starts with connection and a culture where seeking support is met with understanding instead of silence.

In wildland fire, we rely on each other every day — on the line and off the line. The demands of this profession can take a toll over time and mental health deserves the same attention and care as any other safety concern. Often, the most meaningful actions are the simplest ones: checking in after a difficult assignment, noticing when someone seems withdrawn, listening without judgment, and reminding people they are not alone.

This week, we encourage everyone to take time to:

- ▶ **Seek understanding:** Recognize that everyone's capacity to carry weight is an individual experience. Seek to understand by asking genuine questions about how your crew or coworkers are doing. Do not make assumptions!
- ▶ **Assess for challenges:** Be aware of the operational and personal factors that can create chronic stress. Foster a culture where people feel comfortable speaking up and seeking support early.
- ▶ **Listen with intention:** Pay attention to the spoken and unspoken signs of distress in those around you. You do not need to have all the answers; being present, listening without judgment, and showing you care can make a difference.
- ▶ **Champion openness:** Help create an environment where talking about stress, mental health, and personal challenges is met with respect and support instead of silence or stigma.
- ▶ **Learn:** Understanding mental health, recognizing signs of distress, and knowing how to connect people with support are skills that strengthen our entire community.

Changing the narrative does not happen in a single conversation or during one awareness week. It happens through consistent actions, everyday leadership, and the way we take care of each other throughout the season and beyond.

Thank you for the work you do, the sacrifices you and your families make, and the commitment you continue to show to one another every day. Together, we can continue building a culture where people feel seen, supported, and connected, both on and off the fireline.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Givens, Chair, HWSC