

WELLBEING OF FIREFIGHTERS

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THIS PROJECT AIMS TO INVESTIGATE THE WELLBEING OF AUSTRALIAN URBAN AND RURAL FIREFIGHTERS AS WELL AS THE INDIVIDUAL OPERATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO WELLBEING

BACKGROUND

Firefighting is a dangerous and stressful occupation which involves a predictable risk of exposure to potentially traumatic events (PTEs). Firefighters' roles include both the general stress of working in a large organisation, and the specific stress of being an emergency responder, shiftwork, time critical responses, working in uncomfortable conditions, responding to PTEs and dealing with their aftermath.

A proportion of firefighters will develop mental health problems. However, the literature is inconsistent about the prevalence of common mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety and substance use, their development, and what individuals and organisations can do to minimise these problems.

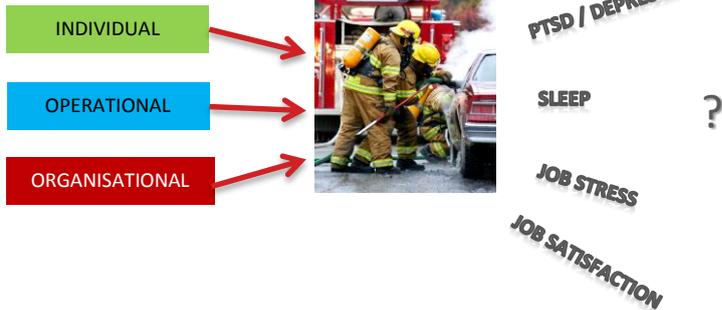
WHY IS THE STUDY IMPORTANT ?

Firefighters' crucial role in emergency management and exposure to major stressors puts them at risk of developing a range of mental health disorders that impact on individual, team and organisational functioning and create significant distress and costs to the individual and the service.

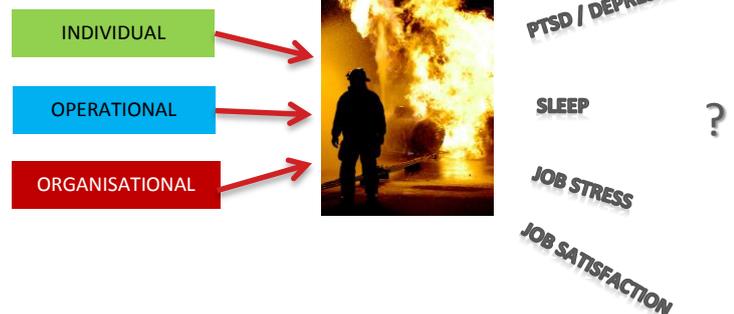
WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THE STUDY MAKE ?

- Improve our understanding of the causes of mental health problems
- Identify improvements in the management of psychosocial risks through policies, practices and procedures to better protect worker wellbeing
- Assist individuals and their services to implement changes that will reduce the likelihood of poor health outcomes and therefore lead to fewer health claims.

Survey Time 1



Survey Time 2



KEY QUESTIONS

- What are the rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use and suicidal ideation among Australian firefighters?
- How satisfied are firefighters with their job satisfaction and quality of life?
- What types of jobs or organisational stressors do firefighters find most difficult and what is the impact of these on their mental health?
- How important is the cumulative nature of the day-to-day jobs in contributing to stress?
- How do the organisational issues such as communication, change, workload and problems with equipment contribute to stress?
- How does the health and well-being of Victorian firefighters compare with firefighters from other states and territories in Australia, with overseas firefighters, and with the general population? What are the health and well-being issues that are specific to firefighters?

END USER STATEMENTS

'I believe what you are proposing will be of great use to our industry ... ACT Fire and Rescue would be very keen to be involved in your study.' *Paul Swain AFSM Chief Officer ACT Fire and Rescue*

'AFAC can see great value in this project and are very supportive and willing to be consulted as required.' *Stuart Ellis AM CEO AFAC*

WANT TO PARTICIPATE? Please contact me if you have any queries or are interested in your service being involved in the project
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