

IMPROVING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF FIREFIGHTERS



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Firefighters are regularly exposed to potentially traumatic events and other operational and organisational stressors. Previous research has established that the following four factors contribute to mental health outcomes amongst firefighters (Brewin et al, 2000; Wagner and Martin, 2012; Wagner and O'Neill, 2012; Armstrong et al, 2014).

TRAUMATIC EVENT EXPOSURE



type
frequency
most distressing



www.mfb.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergency-Medical-Response.html

INDIVIDUAL

job satisfaction
social supports
role
gender
age
recent life events
resilience
life satisfaction
length of service



OPERATIONAL

physical fitness
workload
traffic
role
overtime
false alarms
shiftwork
downtime between jobs



ORGANISATIONAL

feeling valued by fire service
teamwork
communication
resources
support
morale
workplace culture
procedural fairness



Few studies have investigated the contribution of these four factors at the same time, and so little is known about which factors are most important, and how they interact to influence mental health outcomes (Meyer et al., 2012; Di Gangi et al., 2013; Armstrong, 2014). This study used a longitudinal design, and collected data twice (12 months apart) using an online survey and telephone clinical interview:

- 817 volunteer and career firefighters from ACTF&R, ACTRFS, CFS SA and NTF&R participated in the survey
- 300 of the survey participants completed a telephone clinical interview

This study aims to:

- Identify the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and alcohol use in the sample
- Understand whether individual, operational and/or organisational factors contribute to worse mental health outcomes more than exposure to potentially traumatic events and which contribute to better mental health
- Identify whether there are subgroups of firefighters who are more or less impacted by the work



Business Cooperative Research Centres Programme



Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

'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 July 2014

