



**FIRST RESPONDER**  
*Center for Excellence*

# Reducing

OCCUPATIONAL ILLNESS,  
INJURIES, AND DEATHS

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission Statement and Board of Directors.....2

Staff and FRCE Advisory Committees..... 3

The Chairman’s Letter..... 4

Health and Wellness Symposium ..... 6

Regional Health and Wellness Seminars..... 8

Curbside Manner: Stress First Aid for Chaplains..... 10

Stress First Aid ..... 11

Online Training ..... 12

Outreach..... 14

Other Initiatives..... 15

2023 Programs and Social Media Metrics.....16

Looking Ahead to 2024 ..... 18

# OUR MISSION

The First Responder Center for Excellence is committed to promoting quality educational awareness and research to reduce physical, emotional, and psychological health and wellness issues for first responders.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Chairman**

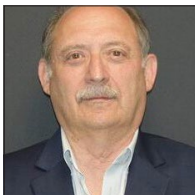
**Ernest Mitchell**

*U.S. Fire Administrator  
(Ret.)*



**Jeff G. Fackler**

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Protection*



**Secretary**

**John Granby**

*JHG Consulting*



**David Halfpenny**

*AXIS*



**Barry Balliet**

*Provident (Ret.)*



**John Miclot**

# STAFF



**Victor Stagnaro**  
*Executive Director*



**Ed Klima**  
*Managing Director*



**Lori Jacobs**  
*Program Specialist*



**Patricia Doyle**  
*Senior Accountant*

## FRCE ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Behavioral Health	Cardiac	Cancer	Physicals	Health and Wellness (Fitness)	Health and Wellness (Nutrition)
Richard Gist, PhD	Tiffany Lipsey, PhD	Chief Frank Leeb	Chief Todd LeDuc	Aaron Zamzow	Aaron Zamzow
Patricia Watson, PhD	Denise Smith, PhD	Jeff Hughes	Kepra Jack	Ursula Ulery	Megan Lautz
Vickie Taylor	Chief Jimmy Brothers	Alberto Juan Caban-Martinez	Alisa Koval, MD	Chris Fleming	Chloe Schweinsaut
Chief John Oates	Brittany Hollerbach, PhD	Chief Tim Cowan	Chief John Sullivan	Fernando Montes	Jonathan Tate
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Derrick Edwards, PhD	Chief Kevin Quinn	Chief Brian McQueen		Chief Dan Kerrigan	
Frank Leto		Casey Grant		Kory Pearn	
				Bert Vergara	

# CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



2023 was an active and productive year for the First Responder Center for Excellence. As we wrap up 2023, the FRCE reflects on some of the highlights, these are just a few examples of the projects focused on the FRCE's core mission of addressing physical and psychological health issues related to first responders.

The FRCE's efforts and initiatives produced results through successful designed training, resources, and awareness. The following updates will be detailed in the report:

- Kicking off 2023 with the first ever **Health and Wellness Symposium** held in St. Pete's Beach, Florida, in January where over 500 attendees participated in a two-day conference featuring mental health, cancer prevention and overall health and wellness.
- **Women's Health Online Training Module** developed and tailored to the first responder community. These modules cover essential topics like reproductive health and mental illness.
- **Curbside Manner: Stress First Aid For The Streets** is now offered as an on-line, self-paced program on the FRCE website. A supportive set of actions to help first responders mitigate the negative impacts of stress.
- **Curbside Manner: Stress First Aid for Chaplains** program offers a series of supportive measures to aid chaplains.
- **The Firefighter Presumptive Cancer Legislation** in the U.S., a comprehensive document outlining the current laws regarding firefighter cancer presumption.

- **The Cancer Pledge**, the FRCE, FDSOA and the Fire Department of New York City (FDNY) developed a series of pledges for firefighters to use for committing to best practices for preventing firefighter cancer.
- **Long Covid Awareness** infographic created to help spread awareness about this disease and to aid in identifying associated health hazards.

Future initiatives include Women’s Firefighter Health and Wellness workshops, Health and Wellness Program Certification and a firefighter cookbook. We also look to continue our outreach to the law enforcement and EMS communities.

Within this Annual Report, you will see the many ways the FRCE strives to fulfill its mission. This important work cannot be accomplished without the dedicated staff, volunteers, affiliates, and partners. Each plays a vital role in achieving the mission, and we are grateful for their continued support.

Sincerely,

**Ernest Mitchell**

*FRCE Chairman*

*U.S. Fire Administrator (Ret.)*

# HEALTH AND WELLNESS SYMPOSIUM



Building on our successful Behavioral Health and Cancer Symposiums the FRCE kicked off 2023 with its first ever holistic Health and Wellness Symposium in Florida. Over 500 attendees were able to participate in the two-day conference that featured tracks on mental health, cardiac health, cancer prevention and overall health and wellness.

Geoff Krill kicked off the Symposium with an inspiring presentation on Mindset and Resilience Through Adversity. Geoff Krill is an O2X Resilience Specialist and an adventure athlete, professional skier and public speaker who suffered a spinal cord injury in 1995. After his accident Geoff began skiing again and soon became a professional ski instructor competing in both national and international downhill mountain biking and skiing.



Over 50 companies and organizations exhibited at the 2023 Symposium.

FRCE Managing Director Ed Klima and Dr. Richard Gist from the Kansas City (MO) Fire department took questions from the audience on effective programs.



Dr. Kerry Kuehl, discusses total worker health and safety programs and provided an overview of Promoting Healthy Lifestyles: Alternative Models' Effects (PHLAME). PHLAME was developed to promote healthy eating and physical fitness among firefighters and was designed to be implemented within fire stations. The PHLAME project involved the implementation and evaluation of two health promotion formats. The first was a team-centered peer taught curriculum. The second involved one-on-one motivational interviewing.

Attendee's from the Rehoboth Beach Fire Department take a break in between track sessions.



## **REGIONAL TRAINING HEALTH & WELLNESS SEMINARS**

Regional Seminars provide an opportunity for the FRCE to bring national subject matter experts to the local level. Our seminars provide an overview of occupational risks for fire fighters as well as measures that departments and individuals can implement to reduce their risks.

### Role of Physical Inactivity in CVD





## MISSOURI

The FRCE in partnership with the Missouri Fire Fighters Critical Illness Pool delivered three consecutive seminars in St. Peters, MO, Columbia, MO, and Springfield, MO. Over 200 attendees/98 departments participated in this program designed to provide an update on the current state of fire service occupational cancer and research, prevention training, best practices, information related to benefits and cancer presumptive legislation and awareness of resources available to both departments and individual firefighters. These seminars, delivered by leading researchers and industry leaders, provide information on the latest research studies, including a discussion of underrepresented groups and research needs, exposure reduction and implementation strategies, modifiable risk factors and healthy lifestyle and support after the cancer diagnosis.

## PITTSBURGH

The Health and Wellness Seminar for Today's Firefighter occurred on December 2nd, 2023, in Pittsburgh, PA. Over 65 attendees participated in this event focusing on the well-being of firefighters. The seminar delved into various aspects of health, providing insights and strategies tailored to meet the unique challenges faced by modern-day first responders.



## STRESS FIRST AID FOR CHAPLAINS

Fire department chaplains can play a crucial role in providing peer support for many within the firefighting community. Chaplains often serve as trusted confidants and empathetic listeners, offering emotional and spiritual support to their fellow firefighters. The unique position of chaplains as non-operational personnel allows them to provide a safe and confidential space for firefighters to express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment. This peer support not only helps alleviate the mental and emotional burdens that come with the job but also contributes to building a resilient and cohesive firefighting team. The presence of fire department chaplains underscores the importance of holistic well-being within the profession, recognizing that addressing the emotional needs of firefighters is essential for maintaining a healthy and effective firefighting force.

# Reasons for Stress First Aid: Acute and Chronic Stress



## STRESS FIRST AID

The Stress First Aid (SFA) program remains dedicated to assisting firefighters and EMS personnel reclaim their well-being and preparedness post-stressful experiences. SFA comprises a comprehensive set of tools focused on continually monitoring the stress levels of fire and rescue teams, enabling swift identification and appropriate assistance for those undergoing stress reactions. This aid facilitates interventions crucial for healing. Ongoing improvements were made this year via funding from the Movember Foundation, which empowered FRCE to create and implement user-friendly digital resources. These resources identify and address suicidal thoughts while providing psychological peer support. They encompass actions to encourage self-care and support among colleagues. Over the course of 2023, Stress First Aid covered 28 in-person trainings and educated a total of 525 attendees from over 100 departments across the United States.



## **VIRTUAL TRAINING**

Recognizing that many departments do not have the time or funding to develop their own training the FRCE developed several training programs in 2023.

# CURBSIDE MANNER: STRESS FIRST AID FOR THE STREETS

Stress First Aid is a set of supportive actions designed to help first responders and their fellow emergency responders assist each other in mitigating the negative impacts of stress. SFA was one of the FRCE's first programs and continues to be one of its most popular.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH MODULE

The FRCE made significant strides by developing and rolling out a series of Women's Health Modules tailored to the first responder community. These modules stand as a testament to the FRCE's commitment to addressing the specific health needs of women firefighters, including how pregnancy is addressed and managed on the job. Comprehensive in scope, these modules cover essential topics like reproductive health and mental wellness. By integrating these modules, FRCE has fortified its mission to promote holistic well-being among women firefighters and their families, nurturing a culture of informed health practices and support.



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## HEALTH & FITNESS

**The health and fitness of female firefighters are influenced by a unique set of factors, stemming from the physically demanding nature of their profession, while also contending with gender-specific challenges.**

**All of which play pivotal roles in shaping their overall well-being and readiness for duty.**

# OUTREACH

Attending national and regional trade shows is crucial for highlighting the FRCE programs and creating meaningful connections within the industry. These events serve as valuable platforms for the FRCE to showcase our provide a unique opportunity to communicate the value and significance of specific programs as well as receiving feedback on future needs.



## 2023 SHOWS AND MEETINGS ATTENDED

- The American Occupational Health Conference | Philadelphia, PA
- FDIC International | Indianapolis, IN
- CFSI National Fire and Emergency Services Dinner | Washington, DC
- Maryland State Firemen's Association Convention | Ocean City, MD
- National Volunteer Fire Council Training Summit | Oklahoma City
- International Fire Service Journal of Leadership & Management | Tulsa, OK
- Fire Rescue International Conference | Kansas City, MO
- National Strength and Conditioning Association Tactical Conference | Las Vegas, NV
- FDNY Foundation Dinner | New York, NY
- New Jersey State Firemen's Association Convention | Wildwood, NJ
- Firehouse Expo | Columbus, OH
- Science to the Station Health & Wellness Conference | Tucson, AZ



## OTHER INITIATIVES

FRCE's ongoing initiatives in 2023 extended beyond the well-known aspects of firefighter health, delving into crucial but lesser-discussed areas. Our dedicated teams and advisory committee members have been diligently addressing these vital issues, ensuring our focus remains on providing the most pertinent and updated information:

- Cancer Pledge Advocacy
- Cancer Presumption Law Guide
- Firefighter Fitness and Nutrition
- Long COVID in the Fire Service
- Movember Mental Health Initiatives

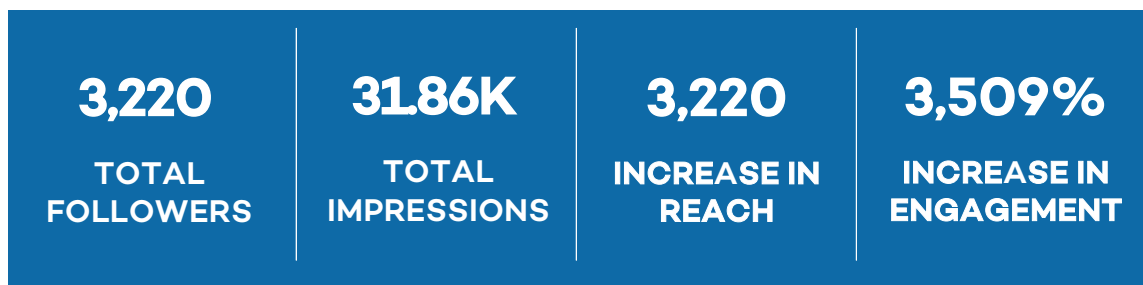
All of these resources stand as a testament to FRCE's commitment to holistic firefighter health and well-being, providing crucial support and information in these lesser-explored areas.

**Explore our comprehensive resources and materials available at [www.firstrespondercenter.org](http://www.firstrespondercenter.org).**

## 2023 PROGRAM METRICS



## 2023 SOCIAL MEDIA METRICS





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# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

**2024 is shaping up to be another exciting and busy year for the FRCE**



New Initiatives Include:

**Women's Health Workshops:** Building on the women's health modules from 2023 the FRCE will hold a series of regional workshops focused on women's health..

**Health and Wellness Certification Program:** While research has demonstrated the need to apply scientific knowledge to physically train fire-rescue personnel to improve performance, promote wellness and decrease injury risk there are limited options for departments to implement and sustain. The FRCE is partnering with the National Academy of Sports Medicine to develop a new curriculum to assist small departments in developing and launching wellness programs.

**Learning Management System:** Market analysis has shown that consolidation of training resources can lead to greater dissemination in a more cost-effective manner. Building upon the FRCE Research to Practice site the FRCE is set to launch a new shared LMS focused solely on firefighter health and wellness.

**Updated Implementation Resources:** The FRCE continues to develop new implementation materials for individuals and departments. Upcoming resources include sample workouts and a new firefighter cookbook.



# FIRST RESPONDER

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# FEMA

FRCE programs are funded in whole or in part through an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) – Fire Prevention and Safety Grants.

Become a year-round supporter of the First Responder Center for Excellence.

**Email [info@frcmail.org](mailto:info@frcmail.org) to learn more.**