



South Carolina State Firefighters' Association  
Position Statement on  
Safety, Health and Wellness Programs  
for Fire Departments in South Carolina

The Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs (NFPA 1500), clearly outlines the necessity and mechanisms for establishing Safety and Health Programs that not only addresses prevention and elimination of accidents and occupational injuries, but also exposures to communicable disease, illnesses, and fatalities.

Data has demonstrated that heart attacks and strokes are a leading cause of firefighter deaths and there is an alarming increase in the nature and extent of cancer cases directly linked to a firefighter's exposure to hazardous environments. Firefighter cancer, sudden cardiac deaths, and injuries may be dramatically reduced when members participate in a comprehensive Health and Wellness Program.

The overall health and fitness of every firefighter is a critical component of a fire department's operational capability.

Therefore, the South Carolina State Firefighters' Association encourages every Fire Chief to implement as part of their Safety and Health Program, or as a stand-alone program, the core elements of a Health and Wellness Program (i.e. Safety, Behavioral Health, Medical, Physical Fitness, Nutrition, etc.). Some components for each core element is listed below and like the core elements, may be implemented based upon the needs and resources of the individual department.

- **Safety** (includes Management Programs, Work Control Programs, and Hazard Control Programs – see NFPA 1500 and OSHA's General Industry Standards 29 CFR 1910)
- **Behavioral Health** (i.e. Tobacco Cessation, Substance Abuse, Stress Management, Suicide Prevention, Sleep Health, Mental Health, etc.),
- **Medical** (pre-employment physicals, annual physicals, health screenings, return-to-work exams, etc.),
- **Physical Fitness** (should include flexibility/stretching, aerobic exercise, and strength training designed to build strong muscles and enhance the firefighter's ability to work harder with less energy expenditure and likelihood of injury),
- **Nutrition** (promote healthy eating habits, provide resources on diet and nutrition, offer moral support to personnel working on developing a healthier lifestyle, etc.)

The South Carolina Firefighters' Association in conjunction with the South Carolina State Fire Academy is dedicated to educate, instruct, and develop programs to enhance our Firefighter's fitness for duty, as well as their overall safety, health, and wellness; and upon request, may offer guidance and/or training to any department desiring to implement or improve their Safety, Health and Wellness Programs.

The measurable benefits of a comprehensive Safety, Health and Wellness Program is cost effective for both the community and the fire department. Therefore, all Fire Chiefs are strongly encouraged to adopt and implement as many of the components making up these programs, as reasonably feasible. By doing so, you will help ensure the safety and well-being of your firefighters and should meet intent of OSHA and NFPA 1500/1582. Chiefs are also encouraged to personally pledge their support and participate in these programs, along with their firefighters, to demonstrate his/her personal commitment.

Adopted by action of the Executive Committee on: