



## Illinois Fire Fighter Peer Support

*Firefighters helping each other*

17822 Hedgewood Drive  
Lockport, Illinois 60441  
[www.ilffps.org](http://www.ilffps.org)

### **Illinois Fire Fighter Peer Support: *The Sign and Post It Proudly Initiative***

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By reading this, believing in it, living it, signing it, and posting it proudly,

I/We, Steven Spraker

**commit to the MAKE IT SAFE FIREFIGHTER INITIATIVE.**

#### **Twelve primary elements of the *Make it Safe Firefighter Initiative***

The Make it Safe Firefighter Initiative encourages: (1) every firefighter to "self-monitor" and to take personal responsibility for his or her mental wellness.

(2) every firefighter to seek psychological support when confronting potentially overwhelming difficulties (firefighters do not have to "go it alone").

(3) every firefighter to diminish the sometimes deadly effects of secondary danger by reaching out to other firefighters known to be facing difficult circumstances.

(4) veteran and ranking firefighters to use their status to help reduce secondary danger (veteran and ranking firefighters can reduce secondary danger by openly discussing it, appropriately sharing selected personal experiences, avoiding the use of pejorative terms to describe firefighters seeking or engaging psychological support, and talking about the acceptability of seeking psychological support when confronting stressful circumstances).

(5) fire department administrators to better educate themselves about the nature of secondary danger and to take the lead in secondary danger reduction.

(6) fire department administrators to issue a departmental memo encouraging firefighters to engage psychological support services when confronting potentially overwhelming stress (the memo should include information about confidentiality and available support resources).

(7) basic training in stress management, stress inoculation, critical incidents, posttraumatic stress, fire family dynamics, substance use and addiction, and the warning signs of depression and suicide.

(8) the development of programs that engage pre-emptive, early-warning, and periodic department-wide firefighter support interventions (for example, proactive annual check in, “early warning” policies designed to support firefighters displaying signs of stress, and regularly scheduled stress inoculation and critical incident stressor management training).

(9) fire departments to initiate incident-specific protocols to support firefighters and their families when firefighters are involved in critical incidents.

(10) fire departments to create appropriately structured, properly trained, and clinically supervised peer support teams.

(11) fire departments to provide easy and confidential access to counseling and specialized psychological support services.

(12) firefighters at all levels of the organization to enhance the agency climate so that others are encouraged to ask for help when experiencing psychological or emotional difficulties instead of keeping and acting out a deadly secret. If firefighters wish to do the best for themselves and other firefighters, it's time to make a change. It's time to make a difference.



3/11/24

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**Sign and Date**

**Supporting Initials:**