

Disaster Prep & First Responders

Team Rubicon discusses 2017 disaster relief efforts and how to prep local communities for the unexpected.

Learn how three mega-stars are using their celebrity to advocate for recovery in Puerto Rico.

Discover more stories online, including ways to support local firefighters affected by the disasters they fight.

When disasters strike, firefighters and EMTs are there to protect us. **But who is protecting them?** Donate to the **Volunteer Firefighter Support Fund** to give back to those who answer the call.

www.nvfc.org/nvfc-support-fund





Learn how two California friends are making big plans to help the world, starting with their local community. **Page 5**



How prepared are you for an emergency? Discover the best products out there for when disaster strikes. **Page 11**



Increase your level of emergency preparedness with these 5 tips for staying safe before and during disaster. **Page 3**

Celebrating our First Responders and Instilling a Culture of Safety

The American Red Cross and its team of volunteers and first responders stop at nothing to support communities devastated by natural disasters. These same communities can help ease the load on our first responders by getting educated and being prepared for future crises.

The American Red Cross is no stranger to disaster and emergency. Our dedicated volunteers, employees and community partners work tirelessly to deliver hope in the face of devastating events, ranging from a home fire that impacts a single family to a hurricane that affects millions.

Supporting our heroes

While disaster response is at the heart of our mission to prevent and alleviate human suffering, the Red Cross also works to provide comfort and care to those brave men and women who drop everything at a moment's

notice to answer the call for help: our nation's first responders.

Every day, first responders bring lifesaving care and safety to those in need, often during some of the most dangerous and chaotic situations imaginable. The physical and emotional strain they can experience is significant, and it is important to empower these heroic individuals by giving them our unwavering support.

In certain instances, this support takes the form of mental health counseling and spiritual care. Other times, this support means a bottle of water, a hot meal and a place to rest after a long day on the job. Between the hurricanes, floods, fires and



Gail J. McGovern
President, American Red Cross

earthquakes, it is our first responders who have worked countless hours for the relief and recovery of communities nationwide.

How communities can help

The Red Cross founder, Clara Barton, was known as the "Angel of the Battlefield" for her efforts to care for wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Today, we carry on Clara's legacy by delivering 24/7 global emergency communication services to military members serving overseas. Our community members can also aid our responders as they face the fiercest of conditions by being prepared. Community preparedness means reduced

risk and improved response, relief and recovery.

In addition to empowering first responders through our Health and Safety education. Start getting prepared today and join the 5.9 million people who are versed in CPR, first aid, water safety and other skills that help save lives. Education is critical for improved safety and can make the difference when disaster strikes at a moment's notice.

Our nation owes a debt of gratitude to its courageous first responders, and the American Red Cross will continue to support all those who give so much of themselves to help others. ■

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With a little disaster planning you can stay safe and support first responders in their recovery efforts.



The United States experienced 59 declared disasters in 2017, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). From Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria's devastation in Puerto Rico to floods and wildfires in California, the disasters varied widely and occurred in every region of the nation.

While that devastation often feels far from home, Chief Operating Officer of the Richmond Ambulance Authority Rob Lawrence says disaster preparedness

is important and advises everyone to follow this simple advice: get a kit and make a plan.

Know the basics

FEMA recommends stocking a basic supply kit with the following: one gallon of water per person per day for three days, a three-day supply of non-perishable food, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio and NOAA weather radio, extra batteries, a flashlight, a first-aid kit, a whistle, a dust mask, plastic sheeting and duct tape, towelettes and garbage bags, a wrench, local maps and a can opener.

In the absence of a kit, however, Lawrence says knowledge of how to make it through a power outage is useful. For example, he says, "In a full freezer, food can stay good for around two days if things are only taken out as needed. When it's half full, it's only 24 hours." Some refrigerated foods, however, might only keep for four hours.

Refrigerated medications are also a point of concern for some, but Lawrence says many will remain unspoiled for up to 28 days if the temperature is between 59 and 86 degrees. Even so, he says,

"People should consult their pharmacist when they get the medication—don't leave it until it becomes an emergency."

Make a plan before you need it

For individuals with chronic health problems, advance knowledge is critical for disaster preparedness. Lawrence suggests talking with relatives and health care providers about needs that may arise in the wake of a disaster. For example, dialysis patients will need regular treatment, and "it's a two-part responsibility between patient and health care

provider to deal with long-term conditions," Lawrence says.

Similarly, Lawrence advises individuals with special health needs to act immediately when warned about events such as hurricanes. For example, patients dependent on medical supplies like oxygen "can plan ahead and anticipate how much extra to get beforehand."

While 9-1-1 is always there, agencies will be strained in the aftermath of a disaster. Prepared citizens make response easier. ■

By Jill Coody Smits

Fire Departments Need Volunteers to Step In and Suit Up

Firefighting departments are suffering critical staffing shortages across the country, but the need for their services has only increased.

Volunteers play a crucial role in the fire service. In fact, 70 percent of U.S. firefighters are volunteers. Many mid-size communities utilize a mix of volunteer and career personnel, while smaller and rural communities rely almost entirely on volunteers.

Staff urgently needed

Despite their significant role in the emergency services, local departments are struggling to meet staffing needs as community

demands increase. Fire departments today provide all-hazard response: in addition to fighting fires, personnel respond to medical emergencies, natural disasters, hazmat incidents, terrorist threats and more. Call volume has tripled over the last 30 years, placing a strain on department capacity.

Sufficient staffing is a critical component to firefighter safety. Departments need enough personnel to do their jobs safely, effectively and efficiently. Short-staffed departments have more difficulty meeting national safety

standards and addressing critical health issues, leaving both personnel and the community at risk.

There are many challenges departments face in terms of recruitment, including the time demands involved with volunteering and the lack of department resources to implement a recruitment campaign. Public awareness is also an issue. A survey conducted by the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) found that 79 percent of respondents did not know if their department needed more volunteers.

Why volunteer?

Departments across the nation are looking to their community to find new recruits willing to step up and serve. It takes commitment and dedication to be a volunteer responder, but there are many rewards. Camaraderie, making a difference, skills development and giving back to the community are all reasons people volunteer.

“We need more volunteers to join the fire service,” said NVFC Chair Kevin D. Quinn. “The good news is, anyone with the willingness to serve can be a firefighter, EMS provider, or support

member. We are a family of over one million people with the shared goal of making our communities a better, safer place.”

The NVFC is working to raise public awareness and assist departments with recruitment through the Make Me A Firefighter™ campaign. Those interested in volunteering can find a local opportunity at MakeMeAFirefighter.org. Departments can visit the NVFC portal for help with recruitment. ■

By Chief Juan Bonilla, Recruitment and Retention Committee Vice Chair, National Volunteer Fire Council

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The Earthquake Bag Helps Communities Create a Culture of Safety

For those living in California and other earthquake-prone regions, emergency preparedness is part of the culture - or at least, it should be. The Earthquake Bag helps make that happen.

After moving to California and experiencing earthquake culture, friends and business partners Zach and Skyler were surprised to find few choices for ready-made earthquake prepara-

tion kits. Recognizing the need to prepare for such an event, the pair began creating their own. The need for "earthquake bags" across their community was quickly felt, and they found themselves creating bags for friends and neighbors.

Shortly thereafter, Zach and Skyler launched a straightforward, no-frills business model: provide an accessible, affordable and high-quality kit to help people stay safe in the face of an earthquake.

Their fundamental message? Support and build our communities.

A different business model

As a direct reflection of the founders' business philosophy, The Earthquake Bag's business model rests on harnessing social enterprise to disaster relief efforts. The goal is simple: encourage those in earthquake-prone regions to be prepared for anything, from days without electricity to larger infrastructure destruction.

Encouraging others to be prepared is a company priority, as is creating a community culture that prioritizes safety. Making and sharing the earthquake bag is meant to help not only those who can afford it, but those who cannot as well.

Global social response

When disaster strikes, The Earthquake Bag provides assistance directly to victims of natural disasters around the world,

with \$5 from each purchase going directly to disaster victims. So far, the enterprise has raised over \$60,000 for disaster relief initiatives around the world.

Zach and Skyler look to take their initial project of helping friends, family and neighbors to the next level and create a system that provides on-the-ground support for all of those in need. ■

By Zoe Alexander

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When Disaster Strikes, Team Rubicon Unites Veterans with First Responders to Ease Suffering

In times of crisis, military veterans can have a dramatic impact on underserved communities.

Shortly after a powerful earthquake devastated Port-au-Prince in 2010, Marine veterans Jake Wood and William McNulty assembled a small group of veter-

ans, first responders and medical professionals to deliver aid to Haiti despite dangerous conditions. It was the start of a remarkable organization dedicated to serving communities affected by disasters.

Uniting forces

“Typically, people think of first responders as firefighters and

paramedics, and they should,” says Wood, Team Rubicon co-founder. “But there’s an opportunity for us to augment the incredible work they do, primarily by leveraging our military veterans.”

The international non-profit, now with more than 80,000 volunteers and over 250 disaster response operations under

its belt, is dedicated to serving at-risk populations affected by wildfires, floods or other natural disasters. One long-term goal for Team Rubicon is growing its local footprint.

“We want to empower veterans in every community across the country to be that auxiliary force. That means they aren’t

introducing themselves to the police or fire chief or emergency manager when bad things happen; rather, they have a relationship throughout the years, so those first responders know who we are and what we’re capable of doing.”

Wood acknowledges that volunteers are often viewed as untrained, unskilled and undisciplined.



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PHOTOS: TEAM RUBICON

“So many people in the emergency management community have come from the military. We can tell them we quite literally have an army of soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen who’ve been trained formally in the protocol they use for disaster response.”

Picking up the pieces

When Hurricane Maria pummeled Puerto Rico last September, Navy veteran Michael Lloyd witnessed the aftermath twice, deploying to the island with Team Rubicon to help serve those affected.

“We were on the western side of the island working with the power company. We made

numerous trips to clean out the open canals packed full of debris. It was like being in the jungle — Indiana Jones type stuff.”

Lloyd says responding is about making smart decisions when everything is messy.

He advises community members to communicate with their neighbors to determine who has disaster resources or specific knowledge. “Create your own tribe of people who can help each other,” says Lloyd.

Giving back

When Marine Corps veteran Yusra Kauppila was eight years old, her family’s house went up in flames.

“My parents weren’t able to get to me in time. I was carried out by a firefighter. That event and the events that followed instilled in me a lot of respect for the helpers.”

Now, Team Rubicon gives her the opportunity to show up on someone’s worst day. Kauppila deployed to Texas last year for three weeks following Hurricane Harvey.

“It was a little overwhelming to realize the gravity of the situation, to see an entire home’s belongings pushed to the curb. I’m five feet and some of the piles stood taller than me.”

The Iraq War vet, who now volunteers as the Southern California State Planner for Team Rubicon,

says community members should research types of mitigation for whatever threatening event is likely in their area. Have an evacuation plan and evacuate early.

A sense of purpose

Retired Coast Guard veteran John Thompson has seen tremendous loss as a volunteer Team Rubicon responder.

“After a hurricane or flood, you find people’s homes and belongings waterlogged, covered in sewage. Driving through a post-flood area, the sight of piles lining both sides of the street containing people’s lives is heartbreaking.”

He suggests citizens sign up to volunteer with a relief organization

and make a difference. “If you have the time and are physically able, you can deploy on an operation or help with a service project.”

The reward in helping others is immeasurable, says Thompson. “There’s nothing better than the look on a homeowner’s face when a group of Greyshirts (otherwise known as Team Rubicon volunteers) shows up with their tools to help muck out their home or cut down hazardous trees after a wildfire. Their tears are real, their smiles genuine. No amount of money could ever be as valuable as that.” ■

By Cindy Riley



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Disaster Relief: Collaboration Saves Lives

Entertainment Industry Foundation's Disaster Relief program brings stars like Marc Anthony and Jennifer Lopez together with the support of the public to provide desperately-needed assistance in disaster-struck areas like Puerto Rico.



PHOTO: GLADYS VEGA

The 2018 hurricane season is forecast to be incredibly destructive, and it comes on the heels of record-breaking losses from disaster in 2017. California had its most damaging and largest wildfire season ever, Hurricane Harvey brought more than 4 feet of rain to

areas of Houston, Hurricane Irma was the most powerful Caribbean hurricane on record and Maria caused the longest blackout in U.S. history on the island of Puerto Rico. How can we forget when large swaths of the island are still without electricity?

As much as we would like to consider 2017 an anomaly, scien-

tists warn that this could be the new normal, and people should be prepared for more frequent and severe storms. This is a key reason behind Entertainment Industry Foundation's expansion of our Disaster Relief framework and our call to the public, along with the entertainment community, to join us.

Coming together

Research and history tell us that recovery efforts are more powerful when responders are coordinated. Entertainment Industry Foundation is a testament to collaboration among supporters and funders. If Stand Up To Cancer's \$480 million raised for critical research has taught us anything, it's that when caring people join forces, they raise more money and elevate a cause.

An inspiring example is Somos Una Voz for Puerto Rico after the island was devastated by Hurricanes Irma and Maria last fall. In a matter of weeks, Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez, Alex Rodriguez and an alliance of more than fifty artists, athletes and other entertainment figures united to do their part for Puerto Rico via the Somos Live! Benefit Concert.

"After a disaster of this magnitude, we must come together and join forces to make the greatest impact," said Marc Anthony. "I am proud of the support Somos is providing to affected communities. Our people of Puerto Rico deserve to enjoy happy and healthy lives."

Meeting ongoing needs

We are encouraged by the work taking place to help children and their families on the ground and we acknowledge the extraordinary need that still exists. You have likely heard about the ongoing power outages, school closures and slow rebuilding of infrastructure and homes. These

challenges represent the ongoing trauma residents endure every day as recovery efforts continue.

"It's clear that the physical and mental health needs of the community, especially among children, increase significantly following a disaster, while services remain limited," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, Director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute and President Emeritus of Children's Health Fund who has been directly involved in grant-making for the project in Puerto Rico. "We strive to meet the needs of the community and the children, not just immediately following the disaster, but for months and years to come."

Accountability matters

It's important to note that accountability is a major focus of grants and programs supported by EIF and its partners. Calling on teams of experienced and dedicated subject matter experts, we ensure that funds raised by the public as well as high-visibility individuals are effectively and efficiently distributed to assist people struggling to recover from disaster. For all distributions, goals are clear and impact measures are tracked and reported.

People do not deserve to suffer in the wake of these emergencies, and we know that together we can accomplish more. ■

By Nicole Sexton, President,
Entertainment Industry Foundation



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The Importance of Addressing Behavioral Health In Firefighters

Firefighters risk everything to protect the health and safety of others, but what are fire service departments doing to protect the health and safety of their own?

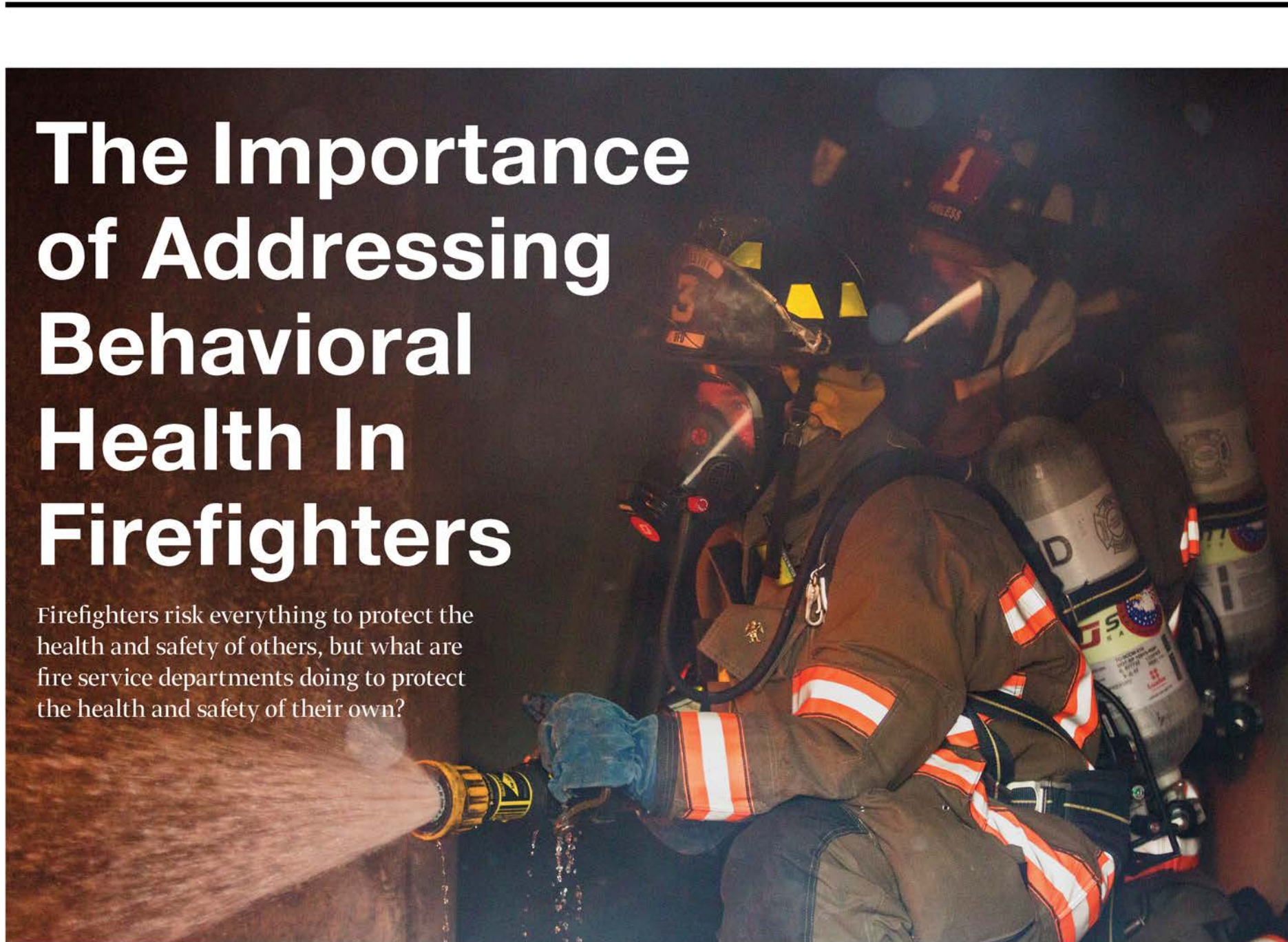


PHOTO: NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL

The first of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives stresses the need for a culture change within the fire service relating to safety. Creating a culture that prioritizes safety and health is critical to protecting responders and is the responsibility of the full fire service community.

Firefighters have embraced the image of being tough and invincible. Many are resistant to health and safety programs and departmental cultural change.

This leaves responders susceptible to a myriad of life-threatening and life-changing health and safety concerns.

Mental health risks

One area that is especially challenging to address is mental health. Firefighters and emergency responders have a high risk for many behavioral health issues, including post-traumatic stress injury (PTSI), addiction and depression.

In 2017, the Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance verified

103 firefighter suicides, which is higher than the number of line-of-duty deaths during the same period. This number is likely low; it is believed that only 40 percent of firefighter suicides are reported.

Emergency responders regularly face situations most people don't experience in a lifetime. Being on the front lines of the worst incidents and frequently in dangerous circumstances brings its emotional challenges.

Changing the culture

Creating a culture shift in the

fire service is necessary to fully address these issues. Responders need to realize it is okay to admit they are struggling and feel comfortable seeking help. Department leaders are key to ushering in these changes.

Training is an important factor. Officers and line firefighters need to be trained to recognize signs of mental distress and learn what to do if they see someone in need. Departments also need to provide resources and assistance for those struggling with behavioral health issues.

Leading the charge

Agencies that are proactive in providing training, mental health wellness and recovery programs and encourage firefighters to seek help when they are in distress are doing due diligence to help change the culture of the fire service. Only through education and with support from leadership will the fire service change the needless stigma surrounding mental health and suicide. ■

By Chief Kenn Fontenot, Health, Safety, and Training Committee Chair, National Volunteer Fire Council

Are You Prepared for an Emergency?

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1 Earthquake Bag

Have you been meaning to build an emergency bag forever, but just never get around to it? If you live on the West Coast or in the South, you know every family needs one. The Earthquake Bag offers easily-customizable emergency bags, so you can get it done and rest easier. Every bag comes with food, water, first aid, hygiene, tools, light, communication, shelter and warmth. Plus, you can make it yours by customizing it for 1-6 people, 3-7 days or more, and add options for your car, pet, office or school. The Earthquake Bag focuses on packing more food and water than most generic kits (over 1/2 more), and all the super-innovative tools and supplies we never would have thought of. Our favorite part? \$5 is donated from every order to victims of natural disasters.

www.earthquakebag.com

2 SEVENTY2™ Survival System

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4 Survival Gear Systems

One of the newest businesses to hit the web this year is SurvivalGearSystems.com (SGS). This is not your ordinary survival gear or outdoor gear store. The founders, Desiree Jones and Mike Semerad, have carefully chosen products most important in disaster prevention and disaster recovery. They have partnered survival experts, such as Mykel Hawke and Megan Hine, to provide top quality content and curate top rated gear to help schools, government offices, charitable organizations, and families prepare for any disaster situation. Customers can plan by choosing any of their top rated products or their Exclusive Survival Packages, which are designed for different types of disasters. Customers can choose a package by situation, length of time, budget, and family size. The owners believe the website's seemingly overnight success is due to more people taking disaster prep seriously and the recent increase of threats throughout the world.

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