



Virginia Professional Fire Fighters **2025 Legislative Agenda**

STRENGTHEN FIRE FIGHTER & FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH PROTECTIONS

The VPPF urges the Virginia General Assembly to pass legislation expanding mental health protections for fire fighters and law enforcement officers under the Virginia Workers Compensation Act (VWCA).

BACKGROUND

Fire fighters and law enforcement officers are routinely eyewitnesses to scenes of catastrophic incidents involving severe injuries, loss of human life and property loss. The cumulative effect of these exposures results in psychological injuries and suicide. Over the course of their career, fire fighters and law enforcement officers experience 50 times more traumatic events than the general population will experience in a lifetime. Sadly, suicide is the third leading cause of death among fire fighters.

The Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission has ruled that [§65.2-107] is the sole avenue of recovery for fire fighters and law enforcement officers for coverage of mental health treatment and are therefore limited to just 52 weeks of benefits. No other employee group is limited to just 52 weeks of benefits for occupational-related mental health injuries. All other employees can be awarded 500 weeks of benefits and lifetime medical coverage under the Virginia Workers' Compensation Act.

NEEDED ACTION

The Virginia General Assembly should pass legislation removing the 52-week cap on coverage for treatment of mental health injuries under the VWCA and strengthen fire fighter and law enforcement mental health protections.

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