



# HOT TOPICS

Oshkosh Fire Department

## CHIEF'S CORNER



Welcome to the first issue of the Oshkosh Fire Department's newsletter. Thank you for reading our "Hot Topics."

In this issue you will see a variety of articles including an article by our Medical Director, our Management Analyst and other Fire personnel on a variety of topics about health, safety & training.

I am very proud of what our firefighters accomplish every day. This newsletter is a small glimpse of the countless hours they spend training, focusing on fire prevention, delivering emergency medical services, and constantly finding ways to improve the service they provide to their community.

To the department's firefighters, "Keep up the great work, you make a difference every day!"

-- Chief Mike Stanley



## PREVENT, PREPARE, PRACTICE

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. Everyday, an average of 123 Americans die from suicide. A recent Ruderman Family Foundation study revealed that first responders (Fire Fighters, EMT's & Police Officers) are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. Experts describe the shame and stigma surrounding mental health in professions that prioritize bravery and toughness. The public remains largely unaware of these issues, since the vast majority of first responder suicides are not covered by the mainstream media.

After a tragic event, such as the ones that occurred in Oshkosh, Appleton, Las Vegas and Sandy Hook, the bravery of first responders is brought to the public's attention. But the public discourse very rarely acknowledges that first responders witness death and destruction regularly, if not daily. These incidents take a toll on the mental health of these professionals.

**Suicide Hotline:** If you or someone you know needs immediate support, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

# WHAT'S NEW

2020 has brought about many changes for the Oshkosh Fire Department. One of the most exciting changes happened this month. In the 164 years of operation, we have never had our own training center. For years, firefighters have had to make do with training at fire stations and vacant buildings.

Firefighting is one of the most dangerous professions on earth and requires constant training to practice skills and learn new techniques. The City of Oshkosh and the fire department have put a plan in motion to turn the old armory at 221 N. Sawyer St. into the Oshkosh Fire Department Training Center.

The first phase includes landscaping, concrete, and fencing improvements. Most importantly, a training tower is now erected. The tower meets the Insurance Services Office (ISO) requirements and allows firefighters to safely train on ladders, advance fire hose, practice ventilation techniques and technical rescues. By having a place for our firefighters to safely train, we are prepared to keep our community safe. Thank you Oshkosh for making our Training Center a priority. We look forward to the future!



## MEDICAL DIRECTOR MINUTE

by Dr. Kerry Ahrens

Our inaugural Medical Director Minute is being launched as I type. I am always floored by the multitude of patients we treat medically on a daily basis with an incredibly diverse amount of medical issues. Just over a month ago we treated a woman in full eclampsia... and we were absolute rockstars! With the knowledge that 'any call' could occur and the breadth of knowledge expected of all paramedics, it is easy to feel pressure and stress on this job more than others. Please be mindful if the stress from work, life, or home are getting to a breaking point that you reach out.

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# EVERYONE GOES HOME

"Everyone Goes Home." These words have meaning. They are not just a cliché that is on the wall of our training room. Every firefighter deserves to go home after their shift .....happy, healthy and safe. Those same firefighters deserve to enjoy the retirements they so richly deserve. To make these things happen, we need to prioritize health and safety.

The first of the 16 Life Safety Initiatives that were created to reduce firefighter fatalities nationwide is **Cultural Change**. This initiative identifies that, "The safety culture within a fire department is reflected through its members' behaviors, attitudes and actions in and out of the station as well as on the fire ground." The first initiative asks us to explore the characteristics of our department to "bring about a higher commitment to safety."

Changing a culture takes time. It does not just happen. To reach the goal of "Everyone Goes Home" we have to make sure our behaviors, attitudes, and actions reflect a high priority on safety on and off the fire ground. Each shift ask yourself, "Am I doing everything I can to keep myself safe?" "Am I doing everything I can to keep those around me safe?" Do you wear full PPE? Do you wear your seatbelt? Do you decontaminate after fires? Do you get an annual physical? Do you have healthy outlets to relieve stress? These are just a few questions that if you can answer 'yes' to you are making progress on "Everyone Goes Home!" Stay safe!

## KITCHEN TABLE TRAINING



- What would your size-up be as the first arriving unit?
- What command mode would you be in? Investigating? Quick Attack? In Command?
- What would your first actions be?
- What is your assignment for the next arriving unit?

# METRICS MATTER

by MJ VanGompel, Management Analyst

I remember the blustery February morning that I interviewed with Chief Mike Stanley & Assistant Chief John Ziemer for the newly created position of management analyst. Although I was very familiar with reporting, data and metrics, I was new to the 'world of fire'. I understand and value the power of data.

During our time together Chief shared his vision of the future. A day in the near future where we would be able to take data from a multitude of sources and tell a story..... tell a story of the life-saving work that the fire department does in the community, share a story with City Council about how the equipment we have or do not have impacts the services we provide, and finally allows us to be transparent with those we serve in Winnebago County, our City and our neighborhoods..... A day when our department would be one of the very few elite accredited fire departments in the United States.

Over the years, I have seen successful leaders make decisions based on data. I have been fortunate to work with leaders who have used data to identify gaps and improve organizational performance; they have used this information to demonstrate the value they are providing or show the need for additional staffing or new equipment/ technology.

***There's definitely a huge opportunity for organizations to transform their operations and decision making by using data***

--Jerry Yang, Billionaire,  
Founder & Former CEO Yahoo

My goal is to help the Fire Department leadership tell a story through the numbers. I spend my time reviewing the data we are currently gathering. Is it the right data? Does it capture what we want to know? Is the data clean? Is it complete? Where are the gaps? What does it mean? What is it telling us? What systems are capturing the information? Then I use technology to show the information in an easy to understand graphical format

In our upcoming newsletters I will share some of our data.... our Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), our story; our successes; and our areas for improvements.

## August 2020



683 EMS Calls



352 Inspections



99 Fire Calls

# MEDICAL DIRECTOR MINUTE

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September is National Suicide Prevention Month. The Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance (FBHA) reported that 119 firefighters and 20 EMT/paramedics died by suicide in 2019.

The stress of the job this year has been 'ante'd up' due to the COVID-19 pandemic and national unrest that have, to this point, defined 2020. Milwaukee County EMS noticed a 54% spike in drug overdoses and 80% increase in suicide attempts from March and April of 2020 compared to the same months in 2019.

We know that many around us are experiencing tension or worry. That being said, if you have new stressors in your life or feel as though life is spinning out of control, reach out to your Battalion Chief, peer support, a pastor/rabbi, or other supportive person in your life.

Additionally, the Winnebago County Crisis Intervention Hotline is available 24-7, 365 days per year. **Call them at (920)233-7707.**

In my opinion, mental health is MORE important than physical health. Often when mental health is not optimal, body health soon follows. Just like a diabetic must treat his/her blood sugar, so must those with depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse or bi-polar disorder.

Regardless, you are all doing a fantastic job of caring for our community as paramedics, firefighters, and overall just good people. The public looks to you for help on a daily basis. What you do matters! Do not forget this.

Thank you for all you do!

## Challenge Question

This acquired condition can cause symptoms of shortness of breath, cyanosis, mental status changes (approx 50%), headache, fatigue, exercise intolerance, dizziness, and loss of consciousness. It is something that can occur from the use of over the counter medications for treatment of urinary tract infections and mouth sores.

What is this condition?  
How would you treat it?

**Answer: Methemoglobinemia**  
Tx: methylene blue IV 1-2mg/kg/dose

## LET'S CONNECT

