PAR360

SLEEP

We all know the leading causes of firefighter death are cancer, heart attack, and suicide. However, a growing body of research points in another direction: **sleep deprivation which plays a key role in the development of all illnesses.**

- Forty percent of firefighters suffer from a sleep disorder, the majority never address it.
- You will die faster from sleep deprivation than starvation.
- The glorification of "powering through" needs to stop.
- A firefighter who is sleep deprived accumulates traumatic events like a filing cabinet that never gets sorted. Sleep is critical to putting bad calls behind you.

Lack of sleep in firefighters can cause:

- Increased irritability & aggression
- Difficulty processing traumatic/emotional events
- Increased emotional reactivity (helloooo emotional roller coaster)
- Raise the risk for Alzheimer's, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease
- Weight fluctuation
- Low fertility
- Substance use
- Problems with gut health
- Your body to be stuck in fight or flight mode
- Higher risk for car accidents

We know the job is a challenge, but there are things you can do right now:
(Even if the station/calls are jamming your sleep)

- Stick to a routine and schedule as much as you can – even on days off.
- Create a consistent bedtime ritual (if you're a parent, you likely do this for your kids)
  - For example - Shower, stretch, do something relaxing, read, lights out.
- Exercise 30 minutes a day but not later than 2-3 hours before bed .
- Avoid caffeine at least 8hrs before bedtime - even when you think "caffeine doesn't affect me" ….it does.
- Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed. Many people think that alcohol helps them relax before bed, but this isn't really what is happening in the brain – you get less restful sleep, and it robs you of your REM sleep – which is responsible for healing your body, recovering from the day, and putting traumatic memories to bed for good.
- Don't eat large meals late at night.
- No naps after 3pm! Take a power nap (30 minutes) during the early day instead.
- Don't overschedule yourself so you cannot relax before you get into bed.
- Take a hot shower/ bath before bed – the drop in body temp after you get out of a shower/bath can make you feel sleepy.

For More Info: www.bluepeak.one

PAR360

SLEEP

- Create a good sleep environment – no screens - reduce all light sources (unless they're red). Screens trick the brain into thinking it's daylight, jacking your circadian rhythm.
- Get out in the daylight during the day. Daylight helps regulate sleep patterns.
- Do not lie in bed awake. Get up after 20 minutes of tossing & turning and do something boring (not screens!)
- See a healthcare professional if you continue to have trouble sleeping – it is important to determine what could be causing this problem.
- A very specific therapy called "CBT-I" is the first line of defense – more effective than drugs, medications, over the counter aids or alcohol.

Tips for Getting Better Sleep at the Station:

- Eye masks
- Noise machines
- Make your room as dark as possible
- Bright lights/get outside during the day
- Red lights on at night to help with circadian rhythm
- Brief naps – no more than 30 minutes and before 3 p.m.
- Make a wind-down routine
- Do something relaxing (read, stretch, etc.)
- Deep breathing exercises before going to bed
- Read or listen to an audio book
- Calm the "monkey mind" – put all the thoughts on a piece of paper, learn meditation.

For Leaders:

1. Research has found poorly slept employees are more likely to: blame other people, be less productive, less motivated, less creative, unhappier, more unethical, more emotionally volatile, more likely to lie, make rash decisions, and drive impaired.
2. Sleep is a wellness & performance issue equal to other priorities like fitness, diet, & agility
3. Consider changes – installing fans or white noise generating machines in common dorms or create individual sleeping pods, creating incentives for good sleep practices
4. Do anonymous assessments of the current state of sleep fitness among members both on & off the job
5. Reconsider shift scheduling & overtime rules to diminish the effects of sleep deprivation on emergency response
6. Ensure a daily rest & recovery time dedicated to unplugging, napping, or doing targeted relaxation strategies to reduce nervous system arousal
7. Shift the dialogue & attitude about rest and know that it optimizes performance. It's not "just the way it is" unless you like injured firefighters fighting a bucketload of different illnesses.

For More Info: www.bluepeak.one