



Coffee Break Training - Management Science Program

Employee Assistance Program

No. MS-2011-8 August 17, 2011

Learning Objective: Recognition of physiological, behavioral, or social changes that occur to firefighters which might indicate a need for use of the employee assistance program (EAP).

Many times in the fire service we think that we can handle anything. We are the iron women/men of public safety and nothing is supposed to phase us. When are we in a situation that we can't handle by ourselves? For our own personal well-being, as well as our coworkers' well-being, health, and safety, we should seek guidance and assistance of a professional nature to minimize long-term detrimental impact.

Many fire departments across the Nation have an EAP to help their employees in many of the following areas:

- Alcohol
- Legal
- Child care
- Workplace
- Drugs
- Financial
- Elder care
- Career planning
- Family
- Housing
- Grief
- Retirement
- Health
- Mental health
- Spousal/Child/Parent abuse
- Divorce

In most cases, this service is available 24 hours, even on an emergency basis. If you think that you may have a problem, or even before an issue becomes a problem, the services provided are there to help you. Protecting our health and well-being includes protecting our mental health as well. Oftentimes it is difficult for us to objectively look at our behaviors and grasp the full scope of their impact. In many cases, coworkers, supervisors, and family members are the first to recognize that changes have occurred.

- Has the normally punctual firefighter suddenly begun showing up late for work?
- Have the grooming standards of one your employees suddenly changed and he/she is now appearing tired or not caring about his/her appearance?
- Has a member of your crew recently gone through a divorce?
- Has someone lost a member of his/her immediate family?
- Have you noticed degradation in performance?

Any of these could be signs or symptoms of someone in need of employee assistance.

Discuss with your company what mental health resources are available to your department and how to go about accessing these services.

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.fema.gov/nfa/coffee-break/