Department of Homeland Security gives NVFC grant to support Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program

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The Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant is meant for supporting programmes like Health Fair, Health and Wellness Advocate Workshops, and National Firefighter Health Week.

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) has received a Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant from the Department of Homeland Security to support the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program. The grant will enable the NVFC to continue many important components of the program, including the Health Fair, Health and Wellness Advocate Workshops, and National Firefighter Health Week, as well as introduce new initiatives in the area of behavioral health.

"We are now in the seventh year for the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program and the program has grown tremendously," said NVFC Executive Director Heather Schafer. "The resources and tools from the program have a real impact on helping first responders get and stay healthy. We are very excited to receive this grant to continue the important work of the program and to expand the components to cover even more areas of overall health and wellness for first responders."

Heart attack is the leading cause of on-duty firefighter deaths, and the Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program works to reduce this tragic statistic through education, awareness, and resources. This includes a web site at www.healthy-firefighter.org, health screenings, a Cookbook, a Resource Guide, and an initiative to allow departments to adopt the program at the local level, among other features.

With the new grant, the program will be able to reach even more members of the emergency services at the grassroots level. The grant will support the continuation of National Firefighter Health Week, an annual event to encourage first responders to focus on health and wellness issues as well as continued outreach efforts for first responder health and safety.

During the grant period, the NVFC will be able to bring its interactive Health Fair to eight additional state fire association trade shows. This includes screening first responders for the heart disease risk factor of cholesterol, a fitness component featuring Wii Fit, and the distribution of important health and wellness resources. The NVFC will conduct a two-day Health and Wellness Advocate Workshop at each of these conferences to provide attendees with the knowledge, skills, and tools to implement a successful health and wellness program within their departments. A toolkit will also be created to expand the continuing education component for trained health and wellness advocates.

In addition, the grant will support several new components of the program. The NVFC will host a series of five webinars on topics related to health and safety. The Heart-Healthy Firefighter Program will also collaborate with Fire Corps to disseminate health and wellness information to departments. Fire Corps is a federally-funded initiative administered by the NVFC where community members assist their local fire department with non-emergency tasks.

Another new component will be the creation of a behavioral health workshop, which will be given at five state association conferences. This workshop will focus on critical behavioral health issues including alcohol abuse, time management, and personal safety behaviors.

FP&S Grants support projects that enhance the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and related hazards. The primary goal is to target high-risk populations and reduce injury and prevent death.