

# *Under the Influence: Tradition, Culture, and Firefighter Suicide*

*2018 South Carolina Fire/Rescue Conference*

*Columbia Convention Center*

*June 12<sup>th</sup> - 1400-1800*

*June 13<sup>th</sup> - 0900-1300*



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

AS THE NUMBERS CONTINUE TO ROLL IN ONE THING IS CLEAR, DEPARTMENTS ARE 3 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE A FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE THAN THEY ARE A LINE OF DUTY DEATH. AND AS LEADERS, BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL, WE MUST DO A BETTER JOB OF PREPARING AND TRAINING NEW FIREFIGHTERS, PROVIDING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR CURRENT FIREFIGHTERS, AND PROVIDING TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT TO THOSE FIREFIGHTERS WHO ARE ENTERING RETIREMENT. WE ALSO NEED TO ADDRESS WHERE THE ISSUES ARE MOST LIKELY TO MANIFEST THEMSELVES FIRST, AT HOME. THIS IS DONE BY REACHING OUT, OFFERING TRAINING, AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO FAMILY MEMBERS.

AS LEADERS, WE MUST BE WILLING TO GAIN AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT KIND OF STRESS OUR PERSONNEL ARE UNDER EACH DAY. STRESSORS SUCH AS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, FINANCIAL, DEPRESSION, ADDICTION, AND PTSD ARE CAUSED BY COMPOUNDING ISSUES THAT INCLUDE: LONG SHIFTS; DISRUPTED SLEEP SCHEDULES; STAFF SHORTAGES; INJURIES; AND POTENTIALLY TRAUMATIC EVENTS.

THIS PROGRAM IS DESIGNED TO BRING AWARENESS TO FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE, THE LEADING REASONS FOR FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE, WHAT STRESS IS, AND TO CREATE DISCUSSION ON WHAT THE RESEARCH IS TELLING US. THIS PROGRAM WILL REVIEW STUDIES AND RESEARCH INTO FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE, ADDICTION, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND HOW IT AFFECTS THE FIREFIGHTER AND THEIR MARRIAGE/FAMILY. WE WILL DISCUSS THE TRADITION OF THE FIRE SERVICE IN RELATION TO THIS ISSUE AND HOW LEADERSHIP CAN DIRECTLY INFLUENCE THE POSITIVE CHANGE REQUIRED TO SHIFT THE CULTURE TO A CULTURE THAT IS MORE ADAPT TO HANDLE THESE ISSUES. FINALLY, WE WILL REVIEW A CASE STUDY FROM THE NEWPORT NEWS FIRE DEPARTMENT AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO HELP THOSE WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH STRESS.



## INSTRUCTOR BIO

SIDNEY IS A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER AND LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT WITH 360 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND IS A CAREER FIRE OFFICER WITH AN URBAN FIRE DEPARTMENT IN VIRGINIA AND HAS OVER 17 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRE SERVICE. SIDNEY IS A VETERAN OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY. HE HOLDS A MASTER'S DEGREE IN MANAGEMENT WITH FOCUSES IN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP, CRISIS LEADERSHIP, AND TEAM BUILDING. HE ALSO HOLDS A BS IN OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH AND AN AAS IN FIRE SCIENCE. HE IS CERTIFIED AT THE INSTRUCTOR II AND FIRE OFFICER III LEVEL AND IS AN INSTRUCTOR AND STATE ADVOCATE FOR THE NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTER'S FOUNDATION. HE IS A GRADUATE OF THE VIRGINIA FIRE OFFICER ACADEMY WHERE HE CURRENTLY SERVES ON STAFF AS WELL AS A GRADUATE OF ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMIES. HE IS A CREDENTIALLED FIRE OFFICER THROUGH THE CENTER OF PUBLIC SAFETY EXCELLENCE AND IS CURRENTLY ATTENDING THE NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY'S MANAGING OFFICER PROGRAM.



ALONG WITH HAVING A PASSION FOR LEADERSHIP, SIDNEY ALSO HAS DEVELOPED A PASSION FOR EMOTIONAL WELLNESS AS HE HAS BEEN A LEADER IN BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE ISSUE OF FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT. HE IS THE PEER SUPPORT TEAM COORDINATOR FOR HIS DEPARTMENT AND IS CERTIFIED IN CRISIS INTERVENTION. HE HAS CONSULTED WITH NUMEROUS DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS, BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE FIRE SERVICE, IN REGARDS TO PEER SUPPORT TEAM DEVELOPMENT, STRESS MANAGEMENT, AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE AND HAS WORKED WITH THE VIRGINIA FIRE CHIEF'S ASSOCIATION AND THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS TO RAISE AWARENESS TO THIS ISSUES OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND FIREFIGHTER SUICIDE. HIS EFFORTS IN THIS AREA LED TO HIM RECEIVING THE 2016 GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR FIRE SERVICE EXCELLENCE AS THE VIRGINIA FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR.

*"It's not the load that breaks you, it's the way you carry it"*