



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

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**Agenda Item Number:** 2

**Agenda Date:** February 15, 2022

**In Control:** Public Safety Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** San Antonio Fire Department

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Charles N. Hood, Fire Chief

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

The Public Safety Committee will be provided with a briefing of the employee wellness programs provided to firefighters by the San Antonio Fire Department.

**SUMMARY:**

The San Antonio Fire Department works diligently to meet the health, wellness and safety needs of one of the nation's largest fire departments. This informative presentation will give the Public Safety Committee an overview of the department's various wellness programs available to firefighters.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Firefighter health and safety are top priorities of the SAFD. The Department established its health and safety programs in FY 2008 to provide firefighters with the ability to manage their own health and wellness, as well as to decrease the potential for debilitating occupational injury or illness during their careers.

The SAFD provides the resources necessary to ensure personnel remain fit, healthy and physically capable of performing their assigned duties and responsibilities. The Wellness Center provides every firefighter with a comprehensive medical physical that follows the International Association of Fire Fighters/International Association of Fire Chiefs Wellness-Fitness Initiative. The physical includes bloodwork, hearing test, spirometry, physical evaluation, chest X-ray (every 5 years), cardiac stress EKG

(every 3 years) and ultrasound cancer screening as necessary.

The SAFD Sports Medicine Facility provides personnel access to a Certified Athletic Trainer that can conduct non-occupational injury assessment and rehabilitation, and fitness assessments that evaluate an employee's strength, mobility, flexibility and heart lung capacity are performed to provide employees with a comprehensive evaluation of their overall fitness level. Although the fitness assessment is voluntary, those employees taking advantage of the program can earn additional funding that is added to their HSA/FSA.

The SAFD has been extremely proactive in its efforts to protect firefighters from being exposed to carcinogens at fire scenes and work locations. As part of this "cancer initiative" the fire department has established an innovative one-of-a-kind program to ensure that apparatus and protective clothing is properly cleaned and stored, protecting firefighters throughout their careers.

The physical demands that first response activities place on firefighters and EMS personnel are well known, however it is also critical to address the impact that responding to these emergencies can have on the mental wellbeing of first responders. The behavioral risks that first responders face include anxiety, depression, burnout and post-traumatic stress disorders among others. Taking care of mental health is just as important as physical health.

In recognition of these challenges, the department has developed several programs to ensure that firefighters remain resilient, mentally focused, and strong. Programs include a combination of technological and traditional methods to provide as many tools as possible to care for our personnel. The presentation will include an explanation of both internal and external resources available to firefighters for their mental health.

#### **ISSUE:**

The San Antonio Fire Department will provide the Public Safety Committee an overview of the department's various wellness programs available to firefighters.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

This is a briefing only.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

This is a briefing only.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

This briefing is for information purposes only