

# Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Health



1. Approach the issue of firefighter health with the **B.E.S.T. Practices**:
  - a. Look at what **BEHAVIORS** may need to change.
  - b. Does your department have, or can you or your department purchase, **EQUIPMENT** that will not only help with training but also with fitness?
  - c. Can you or your department take steps towards meeting consensus **STANDARDS AND CODES** such as NFPA 1500? You may not be able to be fully compliant but every bit helps.
  - d. Heart attacks have consistently been the #1 killer of firefighters – what types of **TRAINING** can you put in place in your organization to decrease the risk?
2. Practice health prevention – just like fire prevention, there is no glory in dealing with a health emergency that could have been avoided.
3. Perform a personal “Size-Up” of your health. Look at all sides – diet, exercise, stress management, lifestyle.
4. Choose a strategy – *Offensive*, where you will make positive changes to improve your overall health, or *Defensive*, where you will take steps to maintain your current health.
5. Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals for your Action Plan – goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely. Have both short-term and long-term goals.
6. Define clear tactics to achieve your health goals. Remember to utilize the resources offered through your department, such as physicals, workout center, immunizations, tobacco cessation assistance, etc.
7. Maintain situational awareness of your health – know your numbers (blood pressure, cholesterol, fasting blood sugar, waist size, and weight), know your limits, and follow up on information that merits attention. Also be aware of sudden changes in the body, which may be a sign of cancer or other health condition.
8. Don't be afraid to call in mutual aid – family for support, friends for moral support, and your physician for tactical expertise.
9. Rehab after all physical activity – stay hydrated.
10. Conduct “hot washes” after each phase of your health program to evaluate what worked, what didn't, and what can be done better – Don't give up!!! Be resilient!!!

The Rules of Engagement for Firefighter Health are a product of the National Volunteer Fire Council. Learn more and find resources for firefighter health and wellness at [www.healthy-firefighter.org](http://www.healthy-firefighter.org).