



**WOMEN IN FIRE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COMBATTING THE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

*Using research for a safer and more inclusive fire service.*

**MINNESOTA, September 3, 2020** – On September 3rd, Women in Fire was awarded \$543,907.62 in Fire Prevention and Safety grant funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Firefighters cannot perform optimally and many experience negative health impacts due to discrimination, harassment, and hostile work environments. Leaders and firefighters alike must be equipped to build, serve, and lead an inclusive, healthy, and diverse fire service. In addition, there is widespread confusion among women firefighters regarding when to limit or restrict firefighting duties when pregnant, as well as when it is appropriate to return to work after giving birth and there is a definite need for research and education specific to women FFs' health and the unique, gender-specific impact of occupational exposures.

During the grant period of September 30, 2020 and September 2, 2022, in partnership with Dr. Sara Jahnke and the Center for Fire, Rescue, and EMS Health Research, tools will be developed and implemented to prevent and reduce injury, build resilience, and promote healthy and safe pregnancies on the job. The funds will be used for training and resources focused on the importance of inclusion, approaches to increasing it, and ways to support women in the fire service. Tools will be created for firefighters, fire departments, and physicians so all parties are able to make informed, data-driven decisions in regards to pregnancy and reproductive health.

*Women in Fire is honored to work alongside industry experts to carry out this much needed project. The value which will be produced by the actions of this grant is immeasurable. Resources for women regarding maternity leave best practices have been long needed within the fire service. In addition, there will be opportunities for regional training, providing inclusion and education at the community level. We are thankful to FEMA and the peer reviewers for recognizing the need to provide these resources for the betterment of the fire service. Amy Hanifan, President of Women in Fire*

The program is based on recent research that found women firefighters reported experiencing verbal (38%) and written (13%) harassment, hazing (17%), sexual advances (37%), and assaults (5%) on the job. More than 40% reported that they frequently felt that they worked twice as hard as others to get the same treatment or

evaluation and that they were watched more closely than others. Firefighters who suffered the highest severity of workplace discrimination and harassment reported more poor health days and were more likely to sustain an injury than those reporting acceptance in their fire departments. Women who experienced moderate-severe discrimination and harassment had negative mental health outcomes (i.e., higher depressive, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms). The impacts of discrimination and harassment, as well as the scarcity of research examining health impacts of the job on women firefighters are critical.

**Women in Fire Mission Statement:**

Leading the fire service community by providing training, education, advocacy, resources, mentoring, and networking in order to enhance the fire service.

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