2024

FIRE SERVICE TREND REPORT

### A FORECAST OF THE TOP FOUR FIRE TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS OF 2024

eso

THE FIRE SERVICE IS AT A TURNING POINT.

As the spotlight illuminates a rapidly changing industry and the associated challenges faced by fire service personnel, The ESO Fire Trends 2024 narrative unfolds with a strong focus on prioritizing mental health, refining recruitment strategies, navigating the ever-shifting environmental landscape, and harnessing the potent force of data-driven insights. These upcoming trends not only confront pressing issues, but also **signify a pivotal moment of evolution for the firefighting profession.**

Let's explore the details of these trends and reveal the innovative initiatives set to redefine the firefighting landscape in the year ahead.

So, how do fire organizations tackle these challenges and support the overall wellness of those who protect our communities? And as the expectations only continue to increase, what technologies, trends, and innovations are agencies turning to meet these impossible demands?

1 PRIORITIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF PERSONNEL
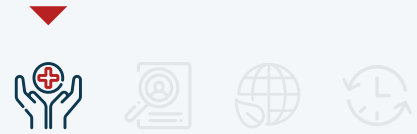
Firefighters' health and safety is nonnegotiable. Putting their life on the line to save another is no easy feat, and there are physical and mental tolls the demanding nature of the job can take on teams.

In recent years, there's been an uptick in studies to better understand the impact the stress of the role has on personnel. Last year, the ESO Fire Index charted out the critical incidents or potentially psychologically traumatizing events firefighters face that were most likely to lead to PTSD. The Index reported that there were 2,414 documented incidents from 237 departments within that year. Yet, the metric was significantly underreported (with 75% of incidents missing information about the circumstances). We all know it's incredibly important for departments to aid personnel in methods of stress reduction and building overall resilience as well as prioritize documentation of incidents. In 2024, we'll see more rigor around documentation and comprehensive health programs.

2024 TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS

Building Comprehensive Mental Health Programs

Acknowledging the unique challenges firefighters face, more departments will begin providing tailored resources, while also hiring mental health professionals trained specifically for the industry to better assist fire personnel with their mental health.

Tracking Critical Incidents

Organizations can provide the necessary care by creating a supportive culture where crews actively and safely report exposure to traumatic incidents. By taking it a step further and documenting these events industry wide, departments can get a comprehensive view into how to better assist their personnel.

Emphasizing Cancer Prevention

Cancer prevention and awareness is at the forefront of fire-related research due to consistent exposure to chemicals, carcinogens, and toxins. This focus will only continue to grow in 2024. Fire agencies should be prepared to track, document, and train on decontamination procedures after a working fire. To understand how often departments are tracking these procedures today, check out the recent study conducted by the ESO Data Collaborative.

Preparing For Increasing Interest in Improved Firefighting Gear

To address safety concerns related to carcinogenic exposures and new toxins related to alternate energy sources, 2024 will bring an industry-wide push for safer gear. As a result, departments will need to plan for supply and demand challenges as the global need increases while demand dwindles.

2 A CONTINUED FOCUS ON RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Firefighting – while an incredibly rewarding career – is an increasingly demanding job with long hours and often lower entry level compensation than other industries. Prospective crew members join the field to be a part of something bigger and make a difference in their communities, so it's critical that departments help them understand the importance of the role they play. This is especially imperative considering that recruitment and retention are two of the industry's most persistent challenges. In 2024, we'll see new recruitment trends, but more importantly, more tools in place to continuously illustrate to the crew the value they're bringing to their communities.

2024 TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS

Improving Budgets Through Value Sharing

In response to tighter budgets, departments have begun sharing the estimated value of property and content lost to fire within their communities. In doing so, they can better prove the return on investment of their services and work towards increasing budgets and, in turn, salaries.

Connecting Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Recruitment and retention go hand in hand. Good recruitment strategies lead to high retention, whereas low retention hurts further recruitment of new members. Crews will start thinking about these two pieces as interconnected strategies – not individual programs.

Giving Teams Real-Time Outcome Visibility

Departments are beginning to show their teams the direct impact of their work by providing real-time access to their outcome data, similarly to how they're sharing the monetary value they protect for budgeting departments. Seeing how much actions such as smoke detector installations or critical-incident tracking helps their community is both inspiring and morale-boosting.

Building Public Safety Programs in Schools

Public safety vocational programs in schools will continue to play a pivotal role in inspiring students interested in a career in the fire service. Consider working with your local school system to implement programs that teach important public-safety skills, such as community prevention and present the routes to a fire service career.

Choosing the Right Tech for Your Team

Technology can make firefighters' jobs and reporting easier and more efficient, if it's easy to use. Focus on tech that has a good user experience (UX) and is designed with the firefighter in mind, no matter their age or tech skills.

3 A SHIFTING ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPE

It's no secret that climate change is impacting our world – especially the fire industry. As Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fires become an increasing issue throughout the United States, there needs to be a wider spread acknowledgement that not only is the problem real and currently happening, but we need to act on it. As a whole, the industry is pushing towards educating and training firefighters to work in the WUI environment, but what steps are individual departments taking to ensure the safety of their crews in this evolving landscape?

2024 TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS

Increasing demand for WUI Prevention and Training

By committing themselves to a deeper understanding of the WUI environment, the industry is demonstrating its commitment to both environmental consciousness and physical preparedness – including looking at gear improvements. Many departments, regardless of their location, will begin training their firefighters for WUI fires.

Gauging the Impact of "Green" Energy Sources

Environmentally friendly energy sources introduce new types of fires. Green energy does not always mean safer energy (e.g. Lithium-ion batteries bring spaces to flashover point in under two minutes). Since this is a massive unknown to the industry today, we can expect more research, training, and focus on these new challenges.

4 REAL-TIME, DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS TO IMPACT CHANGE

Data is an incredibly powerful tool – especially when it's consistent, actionable, and harnessed to its fullest potential. We're seeing the U.S. government prioritize useful data in 2024 and beyond with the development of NERIS – uniformed national standards for better data reporting. Insights made from the industry's collective and individual data can aid in everything from making more informed decisions, enacting changes that lead to safer practices, to generating the funding necessary to sustain individual departments. In order to reap the benefits of this insight-driven decision making, we first need to understand how to capture and analyze this data. So, what progress can we expect on this front?

2024 TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS

Preparing for the Onset of NERIS

The 2025 introduction of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) will be the biggest change to the emergency response standard in the last 50 years. It is designed to help grant departments access to data quicker and more efficiently than ever before. With a focus on real-time data collection and immediate visibility, NERIS emphasizes the ease of submitting data as well as the speed of accessing it. This new system aims to enhance the way emergency response departments handle information and respond to situations.

Integrating More Data Collection Training and Requirements

By incorporating and requiring data collection within new technologies and building good data processes into training, departments will better prepare their crews for data collection and increase their volume of useful insights that are unique to their community.

Driving Smarter Insights

As an industry, there's more of an effort to learn how to analyze the data being captured to ensure more actionable insights. This helps promote more-informed decision making, while giving insight into mental health and overall operational safety for crews. To see where your own organization stands against national benchmarks, lean in on data analyst roles in your department (budget-permitting) or partner with industry experts to access national data collaboratives.

~~Focus Area~~ **Necessity 1**
Prioritizing the Mental
Health and Wellbeing
of Personnel

Focus Area 3
A Shifting Environmental
Landscape

Focus Area 2
A Continued Focus on
Retention and Recruitment

Focus Area 4
Real-Time, Data-Driven
Insights to Impact Change

Look Ahead

The majority of the 2024 trends and innovations surround the rapid shifting of the industry. Between the prioritization of mental health support and resources, the focus on recruitment and retention, and the acknowledgement of proper training and tools necessary for crews working in this ever-changing landscape, the industry is making important strides in keeping up with its increased demands.

As we continue further into this new year, data-driven insights will continue to pave the way for these monumental shifts in how the industry continues to protect its communities.

ABOUT US

ESO (ESO Solutions, Inc.) is dedicated to improving community health and safety through the power of data. Since its founding in 2004, the company continues to pioneer innovative, user-friendly software to meet the changing needs of today's EMS agencies, fire departments, hospitals, and state EMS offices. ESO currently serves thousands of customers throughout North America with a broad software portfolio, including the industry-leading ESO Electronic Health Record (EHR), the next generation ePCR; ESO Health Data Exchange (HDE), the first-of-its-kind healthcare interoperability platform; ESO Fire RMS, the modern fire Record Management System; ESO Patient Registry (trauma, burn and stroke registry software); and ESO State Repository. ESO is headquartered in Austin, Texas. For more information, visit www.eso.com.