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Resilience Begins Within: Mental Wellness for Emergency Managers

The mental health of emergency managers is a critical yet overlooked issue. Managers handle crises and day to day operations under extreme stress, public scrutiny and long hours. This exposure contributes to burnout, and secondary traumatic stress, among others, impacting both personal well-being and job performance. These unique stressors on EMs compound existing complications found in day to day operations.

While there are many policies, and procedures already in place some EMs may not be able to implement these during deployment due to extraneous hours, lack of resources and limited staffing. Furthermore, day to day operations also reveal their own intricate barriers such as lack of downtime for recovery, insufficient organizational support for mental health services, and the cultural stigma that may discourage seeking help.

Often EMs also wear the hats of other agency leaders or stakeholders exacerbating the stress from all sides of the professional world. These stressors lead to compassion fatigue, burnout and can lead to a decline of decision making competency. However there are many solutions to the outlined issues.

Access to physiological first aid, fostering a new culture to mental health, implementing critical incident stress debriefing, and access to mental health recovery time during normal operations. As a field, investing in mental wellness and fortitude enhances community resilience, reduces turnover and ensures stronger community support during crisis.

Presentation Theme: Occupational Mental Health and Wellness.

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