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# First Responders in Disaster Management

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## Awareness, Recognition, Prevention, Treatment

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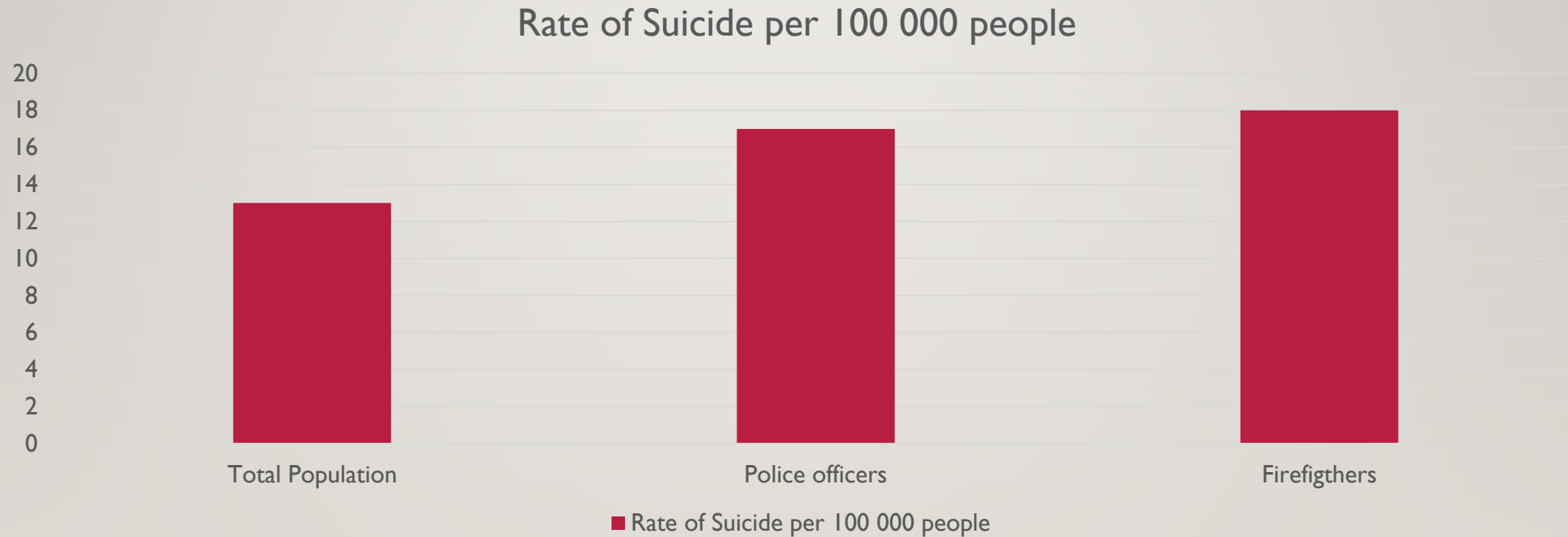
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# WHY FIRST RESPONDERS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT?

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- Vulnerable group – data speaks.
  - 2016, US: Out of 1027 retired firefighters 46.8% shared they had contemplated suicide; 19.2% that they had planned it and 15.5% that they had attempted it.
  - 2012, DE: 16.8 percent of emergency physicians had probable PTSD.
  - 2017, US: at least 103 firefighters and 140 police officers died by suicide, while 93 firefighters and 129 police officers died in the line of duty.
  - 2017, US: 50% of sample male firefighters share that they engage in heavy substance abuse (alcohol) once a month.
- Exposed to a high frequency of traumatic experiences.
- Specific professional and community challenges for mental health treatment.

# SUICIDE RATES AMONG FIRE FIGHTERS AND POLICE OFFICERS



# WHO IS A FIRST RESPONDER?

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*“First responders or Protective Service Workers are those who respond to manmade and natural disasters. First responders are those professionals working within the following fields:*

- *Firefighters*
- *Law enforcement*
- *Emergency medical services*
- *Search and rescue*
- *112 operators and dispatchers*
- *Emergency room staff (including doctors and nurses)*
- *Psychotherapists, etc.”*

# HOW FIRST RESPONDERS DEVELOP MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?

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# BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

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# HOW TO HELP?



# MOST FREQUENT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

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- Sleep Deprivation, Alcohol abuse, Anxiety, Hazardous stress, Depression, Secondary trauma
- PTSD
  - Not a principle condition
  - Not a character trait
  - The past haunting the person
- **What** are the **signs** of trauma or mental health problems?
  - Hypervigilance
  - Loss of sleep
  - Shame, grief, guilt.



# EMDR THERAPY

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- Comprehensive mental treatment approach;
- conducted by trained professionals;
- eye-movement, desensitisation and processing;
- targets past traumas, present triggers and future challenges;
- Includes going through the event while reflecting on it and your actions;

# CONCLUSION

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- First responders are a vulnerable group.
- Exposure to traumatic events may lead to mental health complications.
- First responders do not always pursue or look for treatment due to specific challenges.
- Know how to recognize mental health complications.
- Know how to help first responders overcome challenges.

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