



Kentucky State Fire School

Lexington, KY

June 10-14, 2026



511 Stronger Minds, Stronger Service: Addressing the Mental Health Challenges of First Responders

This course is a comprehensive mental-health training for firefighters at every career stage, from new recruits to senior administrators. Participants will examine the unique psychological stressors of the fire service—cumulative trauma exposure, critical incident stress, operational demands, and cultural norms that can discourage help-seeking. Through peer-led conversations, participants explore how these pressures shape decision-making, team dynamics, physical health, and long-term career sustainability. The presentation emphasizes evidence-informed strategies to build resilience, strengthen emotional regulation, and enhance peer support, while helping attendees identify early signs of burnout, compassion fatigue, and stress injury. After laying the foundation, this session will address suicide in the fire service, including current national statistics, risk factors, warning signs, and culturally responsive prevention approaches. Through guided discussion, scenario-based learning, and practical tools, participants gain actionable skills to support their own wellbeing, improve psychological safety within their teams, and contribute to a healthier, more resilient fire-service environment—reinforcing that stronger minds create stronger service.

This ½ day course will be offered Saturday afternoon.

Lead Instructor: Ashley Messer, Maysville Police Department

**2026 Kentucky State Fire School
Central Bank Center
410 W. Vine Street, Lexington, KY**