



FIRE & EMS BULLETIN



SEPTEMBER 11TH: FIVE WORDS THAT STRENGTHEN REMEMBRANCE & READINESS

September 11th remains a defining moment in American public safety history. Twenty-five years later, leaders of fire and EMS agencies continue to carry an important responsibility: ensuring the lessons of that day are not reduced to a single annual observance, but reinforced through leadership, training, community engagement, and a sustained commitment to service.

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, in partnership with NaliniKIDS through OOPA's World of Words, has developed "Remembering September 11th," an age-appropriate educational curriculum for children ages five and older. The program uses five essential words—**anniversary, emergency, hero, memory, and service**—to help young people understand remembrance, preparedness, helping others, honoring memories, and serving the community. Although the curriculum was designed for children, those five words offer a powerful framework for adults as well, including fire and EMS leaders, first responders, public safety partners, and the communities they serve.

For emergency services leaders, these words can be used as more than a commemorative message. They can serve as prompts to reinforce organizational values, strengthen community trust, and build resilience within the agency. They remind firefighters and EMTs why preparation matters, why public service requires purpose, and why remembrance must remain active, intentional, and connected to daily operations.

These five words can also support responder resilience. Anniversaries can bring renewed grief, reflection, or stress for first responders and their families. Openly acknowledging the significance of the day, emphasizing preparedness, honoring service, and encouraging officers to care for themselves, their families, and one another are practical ways to strengthen organizational wellness. Refer to the Fire & EMS Bulletin on [The Anniversary Effect](#).

Considerations for Fire & EMS Leaders

Agencies may wish to incorporate the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation resource into command staff discussions, roll call messages, school or community outreach, youth programs, or September 11th remembrance activities. The Teacher and Family Guides may be especially helpful for agencies that partner with schools, civic organizations, or community groups seeking a thoughtful way to discuss 9/11 with younger audiences. Agencies should also consider using the five-word framework internally. A brief message from the agency CEO, a moment of reflection at roll call, a facilitated discussion with supervisors, or a community remembrance message can help connect past sacrifice to present-day service. These actions reinforce that preparedness, courage, memory, and service are not limited to one day each year; they are part of the professional identity of public safety.

Actions to Support Preparedness

Emergency agencies are encouraged to use September 11th to review and share the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation resource, discuss the five essential words, and ensure their agencies are prepared for a major event through strong, current policy guidance. The policies listed below contain essential actions for responder safety, operational readiness, and emergency response, demonstrating the agency's commitment to **anniversary, emergency, hero, memory, and service** by turning remembrance into preparation, resilience, and action.

- Computer Access and Cyber Incident Response Plan
- Bomb Threats and Explosive Devices
- Hazardous Materials (Includes references to radiation, explosives, and suspicious packages)
- Fatigue (Ensures emergency responders maintain their performance capabilities)
- Active Violent Event
- Incident Command System
- Employee and Family Wellness

Model policies and resources are available on [MSI Fire & EMS](#).

Community and Fire & EMS Leadership Considerations

Anniversary: Use September 11th as a meaningful opportunity for the agency and community to pause, reflect, and recommit. Leaders can reinforce this message through a brief shift reflection, a community remembrance post, or a partnership with schools, civic organizations, or youth programs.

Emergency: Connect remembrance to readiness by reinforcing the importance of calm decision-making, clear communication, and coordinated response before a crisis occurs. Agency leaders may coordinate with law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, public works, and schools for remembrance activities that also strengthen preparedness and communication protocols.

Hero: Recognize that heroism is reflected not only in extraordinary sacrifice, but also in daily professionalism, courage, integrity, and service. Leaders should highlight examples of first responders, municipal partners, or community members who demonstrate commitment to helping others.

Memory: Keep remembrance connected to people, stories, families, and service. Agencies can preserve memory through ceremonies, educational outreach, mentorship, respectful social media messaging, and partnerships with local faith-based, veteran, and civic organizations.

Service: Turn remembrance into action by encouraging responders, municipal partners, and residents to participate in a meaningful service project, such as a food drive, blood drive, neighborhood clean-up, or support initiative for military families, first responders, or families impacted by tragedy.

The Five Words Resources

- [Remember September 11th Teacher Guide](#)
- [Remember September 11th Family Guide](#)
- [September 11th Education and Support for Early Childhood](#)
- [Video: Remember September 11th – OOPA's World of Words](#)