Suicide among Emergency Medical Technicians Compared to the General Public

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Research has shown that suicide risk is higher among certain occupational groups, including law enforcement professionals and other public safety personnel. A new study found that emergency medical technicians (EMTs) are also at higher risk of suicide death than the general population.

Researchers used 2009 to 2015 data from the Arizona Vital Statistics Information Management System Electronic Death Registry. They found a total of 350,998 deaths in that period, of which 7,838 were classified as suicides. The proportion of deaths attributable to suicide was 5.2 percent among EMTs, compared to 2.2 percent among non-EMTs. The researchers then calculated a mortality odds ratio to compare the chance of suicide death between these two groups. After adjusting for gender, age, race, and ethnicity, EMTs were 1.39 times more likely to die by suicide than non-EMTs.

In their work, EMTs encounter suicide deaths and attempts at a much higher rate than the general public. EMTs are also at risk for experiencing occupational stress and traumatic events, increasing their risk for post-traumatic stress and other behavioral health issues. Future research should explore why EMTs are at elevated suicide risk in order to develop effective prevention strategies.
