



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ST. TAMMANY FIRE DISTRICT 1 HONORED AS ONE OF THE SAFEST WORKPLACES IN LOUISIANA

St. Tammany Fire District 1 this morning was named one of the "Safest 70" by the Louisiana Workers Compensation Corporation (LWCC), which insures more than 19,000 clients in the state. It is the third consecutive year Fire District 1 has received the award, which is based on claims and other variables for the previous five years.

"Through your achievements in loss prevention, you not only accomplish much for your own company, but also for your employees, other policyholders, your industry and LWCC," LWCC President and CEO Kristin Wall wrote in a letter that accompanied the "Safest 70 Award."

Fire District 1 is one of very few fire departments to receive the award, both for 2009 and in years past.

"Considering that we are in one of the most dangerous professions around, receiving the Safe 70 Award for three consecutive years is a tremendous achievement for all of us at Fire District 1," said Fire Chief Larry Hess. "Our dedication to firefighter safety isn't unique, but our results are extraordinary."

Fire District 1 saw a reduction in health insurance premiums totaling nearly \$150,000 last year, and LWCC presented FD1 leadership with a dividend check for more than \$33,000 this morning - a direct reflection on lower claims among LWCC clients.

While fire scene safety is paramount, Fire District 1 also has a mandatory fitness program and annual health screenings for all employees. This not only reduces healthcare costs and insurance premiums, but helps prevent work-related injuries among firefighters.

"The most common disabler of firefighters is coronary artery disease," Hess said. "Mandatory exercise and health screenings reduce the occurrence of these conditions. On-scene injuries are often due to overexertion or strain on the joints. Consistent fitness programs help eliminate these problems, as well. Although there is a cost to these programs, the payoff is lower health, worker comp and disability claims, which saves taxpayer dollars."

The fitness program, for example, costs the Fire District about \$15,000 a year. The reduction in healthcare premiums alone covers that cost by 1,000 percent, and the LWCC dividend check covers the cost for more than two years.

"We are first and foremost committed to safety - for our firefighters and our community," Hess said. "After all, that's what people expect of us and that's why we're here. To accomplish those missions at a reduced cost to taxpayers is an added benefit, and one of which we are very proud."

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