

JUNE IS PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

June 27 is National PTSD Awareness Day.

A personal message from Laurie Elkins.

I lost my brother to suicide.

It's not something I talk about often. But with June 27 – National PTSD Awareness Day – approaching, I think it's worth saying out loud. The people in public safety, emergency management, fire, EMS, and law enforcement carry things that don't leave when the shift ends. Trauma accumulates. It compounds. And too often, it stays silent – because the culture around you doesn't always leave room for it. First responders experience PTSD at rates two to three times higher than the general population. Suicide claims more law enforcement officers and firefighters each year than line-of-duty deaths combined.

These aren't just statistics. They are people – with families, with partners, with crews who depend on them. People who showed up for everyone else.

My son had a classmate in high school who was making plans to end his life. My son spoke up. That young man got the help he needed and is doing well today. I think often about what the alternative would have looked like – for him, and for my son, who would have carried that weight for the rest of his life.

Speaking up is hard. Asking for help is hard. And building a culture where it's expected – where checking in on your partner is as natural as checking your gear – takes deliberate, intentional effort.