



Medical Cannabis for First Responders

First Responders can benefit from Medical Cannabis.

First responders—firefighters, police officers, corrections, EMS, and dispatchers—play a vital role in ensuring public safety and handling crises. However, the demanding nature of their work exposes them to numerous physical and psychological challenges that can significantly impact their well-being. Medical cannabis can offer relief from the physical pain and mental health injuries that first responders endure from their service to the community.

Medical Cannabis can help save the lives of First Responders!



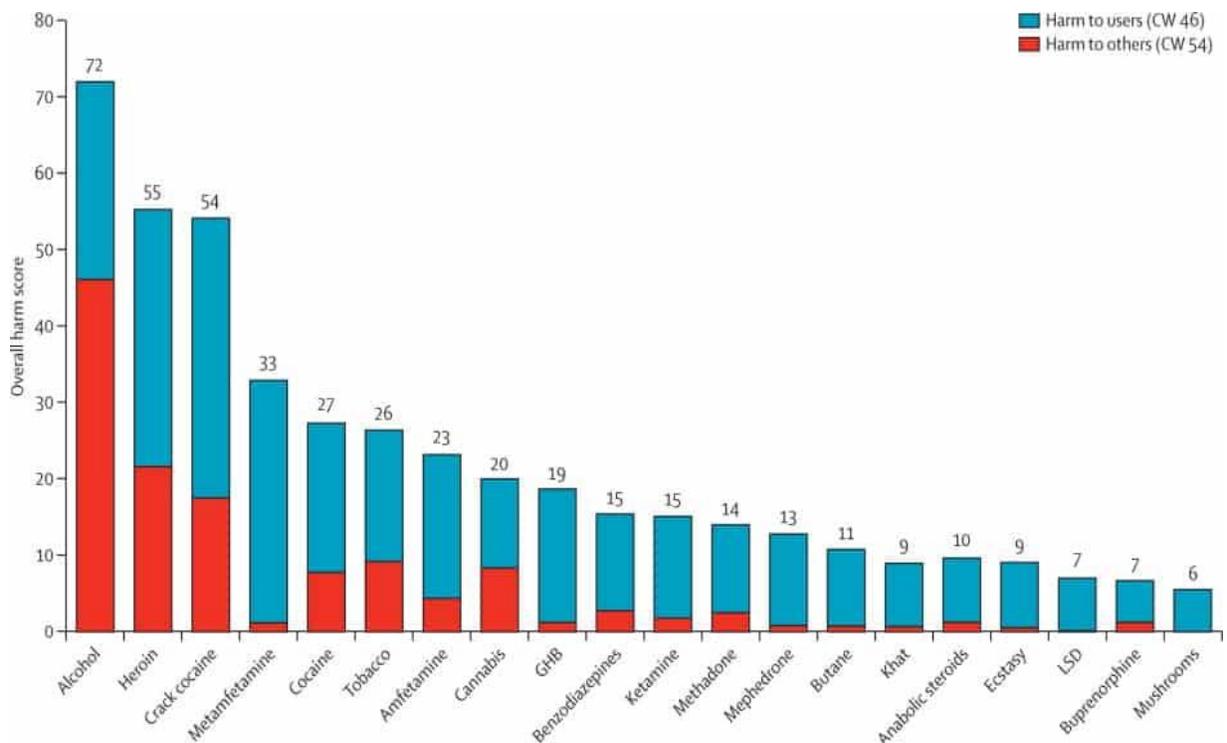
Artwork by [Dan Sun Gallery](#)

Overview of the injuries and illnesses among First Responders and how Medical Cannabis can help.

First responders face the risk of many physical and mental injuries throughout their careers. They constantly face dangerous situations such as fires, traumatic accidents, violent crimes, and EMS emergencies that only increase their likelihood of injury and chronic pain. These encounters are often emotionally traumatic events that can include deaths, injuries, and disasters, leading to mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, moral injury and a higher rate of suicide than the general population. The toll of shift work, irregular hours, and high-stress environments can exacerbate these issues, often leading to burnout, substance abuse, and difficulties in maintaining personal relationships. [Sleeping disorders are extremely common among first responders](#) and further exacerbate physical and mental health issues.



In recent years, there has been growing interest in alternative treatments to support the mental and physical health of first responders. Medical cannabis has emerged as a potential option due to its therapeutic properties. Cannabis contains cannabinoids like THC and CBD (non-psychoactive), which offer relief from pain, anxiety, inflammation, sleeping disorders, PTSD symptoms, and other issues. For first responders suffering from chronic pain or mental health conditions, medical cannabis offers a relatively safe alternative to opioids and other medications that carry a high risk of addiction and adverse side effects.



<https://www.cannamd.com/scientists-rank-most-dangerous-drugs/>

The benefits of [medical cannabis for first responders](#) extend beyond symptom relief. By providing a natural and less addictive treatment option, it may improve quality of life and job performance. Additionally, cannabis has the potential to reduce reliance on pharmaceuticals, which often have significant side effects. Cannabis has also been shown to significantly reduce alcohol use. Studies show alcohol harm at the top of the list among all drugs and substances. With proper regulation and medical oversight, cannabis could serve as an essential component of support programs aimed at promoting the overall health and resilience of first responders.

Numerous fire departments across the country—such as New York City, Pittsburgh, Prince Williams and Bernalillo Counties—have changed [policy to allow for off-duty medical cannabis](#). They made this change without violating [federal](#) or state regulations, with no loss in federal funding, and while in compliance with the [Drug Free Workplace Act](#). Fire departments with this policy change are reporting less alcohol consumption and alcohol related issues. Firefighters are also reporting better sleep, less anxiety, better coping with stress, better family interactions, and generally feeling a better quality of life. A safe and drug-free workplace free of impairment can be maintained while allowing off-duty medical cannabis. First responders should be afforded the same rights and freedoms of medication choice as the citizens they serve. When our first responders are healthier, everyone benefits; family, co-workers, employers, and the community.

While first responders face numerous physical and psychological challenges due to the nature of their work, exploring and integrating medical cannabis as a therapeutic tool represents a promising avenue to enhance their well-being. Supporting first responders through effective treatment options is crucial to ensuring they remain healthy and capable of serving their communities effectively and surviving their career.

What is medical cannabis and how does it work to help symptoms?

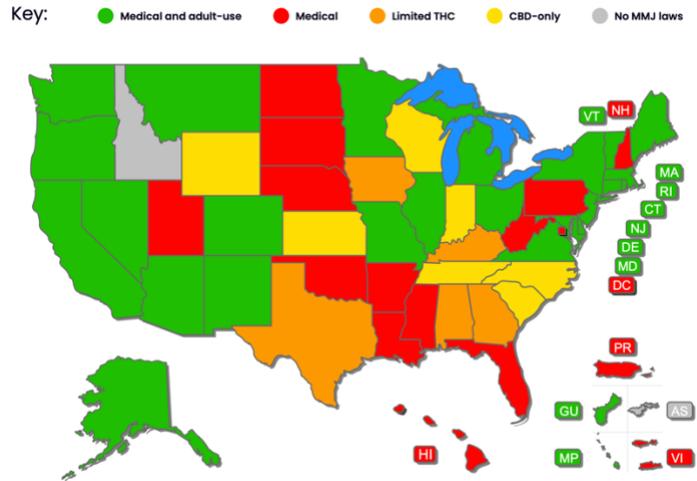
First, let's briefly talk about the history of hemp and cannabis. Medical cannabis, derived from the cannabis and hemp plant, has a long history of medicinal use dating back thousands of years. Additionally, it was used for clothing, ship sails, paper, rope, oils, and nutrition (the seeds are high in protein). One acre of hemp that grows annually produces the same amount of paper as four acres of trees that take years to grow. Not only is hemp more efficient and productive, it also leaves the soil rich in nutrients. Thomas Jefferson and George Washington had large hemp farms, and Benjamin Franklin used hemp paper for his printing press. Cannabis was a globally common medicine for hundreds of years, including in Europe and the US, and in 1845 was in the US pharmacopeia. The 1937 Marijuana Tax Act made it too expensive to produce, however that was lifted briefly in 1942 with the release of a film called [Hemp for Victory](#). The film was to educate farmers on growing hemp for war efforts, mostly for rope. In the early 1970's, cannabis was classified as a schedule 1 drug with no medical benefits, even though the US government had a patent on CBD. *The Emperor Wears No Clothes* by [Jack Herer](#) has a wealth of historical information on hemp and cannabis.



Measuring a hemp plant 4m. high.
Arlington Farm. Aug. 28, 1942.

[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Medical cannabis has become widely popular again across the US and several other countries. In the US, CBD is widely used and federally legal with the [2018 Farm Bill](#). There are currently 40 states with a medical cannabis policy and 24 states have a recreational policy. Cannabis is currently under rescheduling review by the DEA.



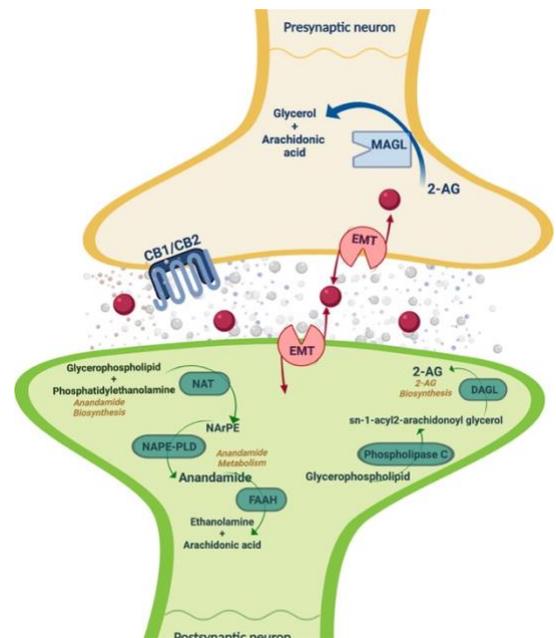
<https://www.safeaccessnow.org/states#gsc.tab=0>

The plant contains a variety of chemical compounds known as cannabinoids, with the most common and well-known being tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). These cannabinoids interact with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS), a complex cell-signaling system that plays a crucial role in maintaining homeostasis, or the body's internal balance. The [entourage effect](#) is when these cannabinoids work together in the body for better symptom relief.

The cannabis plant is primarily classified into two main species: Cannabis sativa and Cannabis indica. It is commonly referred to as hemp and cannabis. Although they are primarily the same plant, hemp has a lower THC content and is used for CBD content and industrial products, while cannabis has a higher level of THC and is used mostly for its flower. It produces a range of cannabinoids, terpenes, and flavonoids that contribute to its therapeutic effects. These compounds can be used in many forms including oils, edibles, vapors, and topical applications, allowing for versatile administration tailored to each individual's symptom relief needs and medical treatments.

Did you know the body has its own cannabinoid system?

The [endocannabinoid system \(ECS\)](#) is composed of endogenous cannabinoids (endocannabinoids), receptors (CB1 and CB2) and enzymes that synthesize and degrade these molecules. The ECS is present throughout the body, including the brain, immune system, and nervous system. Its primary function is to regulate essential physiological processes such as mood, appetite, sleep, immune response, pain sensation, and inflammation.



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Cannabis interacts with the ECS by binding to cannabinoid receptors. Cannabinoids like THC mimic the action of naturally occurring endocannabinoids by binding to CB1 receptors in the brain, producing psychoactive effects and influencing mood, perception, and cognition. CBD, on the other hand, interacts differently; it modulates receptor activity and inhibits the breakdown of endocannabinoids, effectively enhancing their levels and promoting balance.

By engaging with the ECS, cannabis helps restore homeostasis disrupted by stress, injury, or disease. For first responders, this means potential relief from the physical pain, inflammation, and psychological trauma associated with their demanding roles. Cannabis's ability to influence the ECS supports better regulation of bodily functions, which can lead to improved resilience and recovery. Since medical cannabis is a PRN medication and each person's endocannabinoid system is unique to them, there is no one-size-fits-all dosage. The best practice is to consult with a medical cannabis provider, educate yourself on the different administration routes, dosages, risks, and to start slow and low. Medical cannabis patients are looking to achieve the right balance of dosage; a dosage that is enough to get relief, but not so much that it causes unwanted side effects.

The cannabis plant's compounds work synergistically with the body's endocannabinoid system to promote balance and health. By understanding this interaction, first responders can maximize the therapeutic potential of medical cannabis in managing daily physical and psychological challenges. Responsible use can harness the full benefits of this natural medicine, and ongoing research into the benefits of medical cannabis is of utmost importance. Medical cannabis can produce positive outcomes for first responders while maintaining a drug free workplace. First responders should be afforded the same rights and freedoms as the citizens they serve and be allowed access to off-duty plant medicine.

First Responders are the first to help others, but the last to help themselves.

Help protect the protectors by allowing First Responder access to safe and legal plant medicine!



Please [help us](#) in the mission! Thank you!





Risk a lot to save a lot is the firefighter mantra.

Firefighters help their community, but ultimately it comes with great sacrifice that affects them and their families mentally, physically, and emotionally. We are entrusted to save lives and property from fires, medical crisis and traumas. We are expected to be professional, skillful, and contain our emotions when in traumatic situations. We have the skills to do the job, yet the job can still negatively impact our health and well-being. Firefighters are trusted to responsibly consume alcohol and prescription medications when off-duty, and can be trusted to do the same with medical cannabis. Medical cannabis can help firefighters manage conditions associated with their public service. Over the course of a career, medical cannabis can save a firefighter's life.

