

BIE SAFETY ADVISOR



**CONSTRUCTION SUICIDE
PREVENTION WEEK**

September 9-13, 2024

Together We Can Save Lives

The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates among professions - with the rate among male construction workers 75% higher than men in the general population, [according](#) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. An estimated 6,000 construction workers died as a result of suicide in 2022, an increase from 2021, [according](#) to the most recent data available. That compares to around 1,069 who died from a construction work-related injury.

There is no single cause for suicide. Often, stressors and health issues come together to create feelings of hopelessness and despair. Most people who take their lives exhibit one or more warning signs either through what they say or what they do. It is important that managers and coworkers are prepared to notice and act on changes in a colleague's behavior.

Set the Tone

Employers should lead with compassion and foster a supportive environment:

- Speak out about workplace stress and mental health challenges and express your commitment to prioritizing employee mental health and well-being.
- Ask about workplace stressors and discuss what support or services may help. Implement changes that are feasible based on feedback.
- Institute an "open door" policy that encourages employees to share concerns and ideas with management without fear of retaliation.
- Encourage employees to connect and support one another by providing opportunities to interact.

Implement Policies and Programs

- Review policies and procedures for how work is managed to determine if additional flexibility is needed.
- Evaluate your overall work environment, such as customer interactions, productivity schedule, pace of work, etc., to determine if there are workplace stress factors you could address.

- Share educational resources that address workplace stress, mental health, and substance use.
- If your organization has an employee assistance program (EAP), remind employees about the benefits and that it is confidential, and encourage them to use it.
- Help employees understand their health benefit plans, including coverages for mental health and substance use.
- Offer support for employees who have been affected by suicide loss, providing resources and services to support their healing journey.
- Provide information about mental health resources and services available in your community.

Equip Frontline Supervisors

- Reinforce the supervisor's role in listening and validating employees' feelings, concerns, and experiences. It's important they understand that being dismissive can be harmful.
- Ensure supervisors implement all the flexibilities that you have built into your work policies and procedures. Encourage them to be creative in making adjustments for employees who are experiencing stressors at home and work, or who have been affected by suicide loss.
- Invite professionals to educate and train supervisors to recognize suicide warning signs and initiate conversations with employees.
- Create space in management and other meetings for frontline supervisors to share their own concerns and learn from each other.
- Hold supervisors accountable and coach those who are struggling with implementing your policies and procedures.

Be Prepared

- **Be Aware** that there can be warning signs for suicide risk. Mental health and suicide can be difficult to talk about- especially with work colleagues-but your actions can make a difference. When you work closely with others, you may sense when someone is struggling.
- **Pay Attention** to warning signs that may signal someone is at risk for suicide.
- **Reach Out** if you are concerned about an employee or coworker. Talk with them privately, give them your full attention, and listen without judgement.
- **Take Action** in a crisis. Stay with the employee and seek immediate help. Contact emergency services, call or text 988, or visit 988lifeline.org/chat
- **Be Ready** to support yourself and help coworkers cope with a suicide loss.



Monthly Toolbox Talk

TOOLBOX TALK

RECOGNIZE THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE



Suicides don't occur in a vacuum. In fact, these tragic losses of life can often be prevented. You just have to know what warning signs to look for and pay attention to when an individual is thinking about harming themselves.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Suicide is the 12th leading cause of death in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- In 2020, there were 1.20 million suicide attempts.
- While women are more likely to attempt suicide, in 2020 men were 3.88 times more likely to die from suicide.

WHY IT MATTERS

By and large suicide is preventable. If you pay attention to possible warning signs – in yourself and others – you may be able to help save a life. Remember: **Talking about your concerns with someone is more likely to save them than to drive them to see their plans through.**

GOOD TO KNOW

- **Verbal warning signs.**
 - Talking about being a burden, or the world being better without them.
 - Expressing the desire to no longer exist or die.
- **Emotional warning signs.**
 - No longer able to find joy or pleasure in things they once enjoyed.
 - Emotional outbursts (anger, sadness, anxiety, etc.) happen frequently or without warning.
 - Sudden joy or excitement after prolonged periods of depression.
- **Behavioral change warning signs.**
 - Frequent mood swings.
 - Giving away their belongings.
 - Sleeping all the time or changes in eating habits.
- **Know when to make the call.** If you or someone you care for is at a really low point, help is always available. You can call, text, or chat 988 to reach the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's](#) trained counselors directly.



Call, text or chat [988](#) for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Find resources at [ConstructionSuicidePrevention.com](#).

