



Risk Management & Safety Department

Toolbox Talk

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Toolbox Talk

In 2016, there were more than 44,000 suicides in the US. This is more than the 37,000 deaths in motor-vehicle crashes that occur annually. The number of suicides increased by approximately 25% since 1999. Suicide is a public health crisis that has been made worse by the opioid epidemic in the US. There were 62,000 drug overdoses in 2016. This was an increase of 19% over 2015.

The construction industry is considered to be high risk for suicide. In July 2016, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released the first study of suicides by occupation. Construction had the most suicides and the second highest rate of suicides. The rate was four times higher than in the general population. If the rate for architects and engineers is included the rate is approximately six times higher than the general population. Males account for almost four out of five suicide deaths.

Why the construction industry?

Construction is a male-dominated industry. Construction has been considered a "rough and tough" industry to work in. Many construction employees work long hours and spend a lot of time away from their families. Many employees miss a lot of family activities and some employees get lost in their work without positive outlets in their lives.

There is a lot of pressure in the construction industry. This is frequently expressed as budget, schedule, productivity, quality and safety standards. The end of season or end of project layoffs can create financial stress if someone has not put money away for the off-season.

Studies reveal that a majority of male employees do not take time to see doctors or mental-health counselors. The industry has a high rate of alcohol and drug use disorders, too, and the highest use of prescription pain medications. These are among the risk factors that make construction employees vulnerable to suicide.

Help is Available

Suicide is preventable! Seeking help is the first step. We share this information to promote our Safety 24/7 Culture. We need everyone to care for one another. It's not enough to focus on getting people home safely at the end of a shift. For "at-risk" employees it's more important to get employees back to work safe from home.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a free, confidential service that is available on a 24/7 basis. It provides crisis intervention for people having thoughts about self-harm or who are considering taking their life. **The telephone number is 800-273-8255.**

Construction companies like ours are increasingly integrating mental health and suicide prevention in safety, health & wellness programs as well as in employee-benefit programs.

Suicide prevention posters have been displayed in all company facilities, and wallet cards have been distributed that highlight warning signs for suicide risk. These both have the telephone number for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Action Steps

1. Talk about the workplace posters -- what did you think when they first were posted? What do you think now?
2. Pass out the wallet cards and talk about the warning signs for suicide.
3. Who can you call within the company if confidential support is desired for yourself or your family? (Correct answer is Cal Beyer, the Director of Risk Management; the Director of Human Resources Tammy Hancock or the Human Resources Generalist Tracy Allen.

EMPLOYEE #	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE