

FIREARM SAFETY AND SUICIDE PREVENTION



After the morning stretch and flex, Danny's union hosted a breakfast presentation on suicide prevention. "Over half of all gun deaths in the United States are suicides" the presenter said. The presenter also talked about warning signs of suicide, and how "the most important thing you can put between a person thinking about suicide and their method of ending their life is TIME AND DISTANCE". Danny started thinking about his 16-year-old son, Jason – he had figured it was just regular teenager things, but recalled Jason recently saying, "I know this family would be better off without me". On the drive home, Danny took a detour and stopped at a sporting goods store to pick up a pistol safe. At home, Danny retrieved his gun, removed the magazine, locked the gun using the cable lock it had come with, and secured it in the safe. Then he put his boxes of ammo in his father's old ammo box, which had a heavy-duty padlock.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Understand the Risk: The presence of firearms and other lethal means in the home elevates the risk of suicide for all who reside there. In moments of crisis, access to a firearm can be lethal. Knowing this is essential to reducing risk.

Lock, Limit or Temporarily Remove: Storing firearms securely when not in use is a critical action step for firearm owners. Locking firearms in a safe, unloaded with ammo locked separately is a good starting point for secure storage. In times of increased risk, consider storing firearms outside of the home. One myth about preventing suicide is that, if the firearm is not accessible, the person thinking of suicide will just find another way to take their life – this isn't true! When people don't have access to a lethal means of suicide like a firearm during a crisis, they are unlikely to look for another method.

Normalize Secure Storage: Firearms are involved in over half of the suicides in the U.S. Recognize that secure firearm storage is a critical component to preventing suicide and normalize storing firearms securely to prevent suicide.

JOBSITE DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Were you surprised to hear about the role firearms play in suicide?
2. What are some other ways someone's personal firearms might be stored securely to prevent suicide?

THE BOTTOM LINE

In construction, many workers own firearms for protection, hunting or sport. But when life feels overwhelming, easy access to a firearm can turn a moment of despair into a tragedy. Taking simple steps—like locking up firearms or asking a loved one to store them—can save lives. These conversations might feel uncomfortable, but they are necessary. Making firearms less accessible gives someone in crisis time for the suicidal urge to pass and time for them to breathe and find support.

Lastly, if you or someone you know is in crisis, please call, text or chat with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by calling or texting the number 988.

Don't forget to mention your company's mental health resources or local service options.