

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE IN CONSTRUCTION



Sonya is a project manager in construction and attended a presentation from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). She learned that the construction industry has the second-highest suicide rate of any industry in the U.S. She also learned that factors like long hours, high-pressure deadlines, job and financial instability, chronic pain, substance use, and the industry's "tough" culture can contribute to an increased risk for suicide. When she returned to the job site, she brought the message with her: we need to talk about this.

SUICIDE IN CONSTRUCTION

High Rates of Suicide: About three construction workers die in preventable jobsite accidents every day in the United States. It's estimated that twelve construction workers across the U.S. die by suicide daily.^{iii,iv} Compared to the general population, male construction workers have 3 times higher suicide rate, while women construction workers have 4 times higher rate (than women in other industries).^v

Industry Risk Factors: Construction is a physically demanding profession, and workers in this field often experience long hours, chronic pain, pressure to perform, and frequent travel or separation from family and friends. Many workers also lack access to consistent mental health care.

Cultural Barriers to Getting Help: Construction has a strong culture of self-reliance. Workers are often expected to "tough it out" rather than speak up about what they're going through.

Suicide Can Often Be Prevented: Even when suicide risk is increased, there is always help and support available. Knowing the risks in the construction industry allows us to address the issues that are possible to change- like feeling connected, being able to open up, accessing support- just to name a few.

JOBSITE DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Now that we know how suicide impacts the construction industry, what are some things we can do differently on this job site?
2. How do discussions about mental health and suicide promote a stronger workplace culture?

THE BOTTOM LINE

Suicide impacts the construction industry at a high rate. However, it is important to know that there is always hope and suicide can be prevented. When we learn what can make construction workers feel more stressed or unsafe, and we do things to help—like talking to someone about how they're doing or checking in with coworkers about their stress or mental health—we can help by supporting each other, especially when you notice someone might be struggling. We can also help keep people safe and even save lives.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call, text, or chat with the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988 which is available in both English and Spanish.

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

ⁱⁱⁱ CPWR Data Center calculations for April 2025 Data Bulletin using National Center for Health Statistics, 2022-2023 Mortality Multiple Cause File. <https://www.cprw.com/wp-content/uploads/DataBulletin-April2025.pdf>

^{iv} U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries Summary, 2023." Press Release. 2024 December 19. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.nr0.htm>

^v Sussell A, Peterson C, Li J, Miniño A, Scott KA, Stone DM. Suicide Rates by Industry and Occupation — National Vital Statistics System, United States, 2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2023;72:1346–1350. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7250a2>