

OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

# Addressing Suicide in the Construction Industry

Construction workers have one of the highest suicide rates compared to other industries, with their rates being approximately four times higher than the general population.<sup>1</sup> This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need for targeted mental health support in the construction sector.

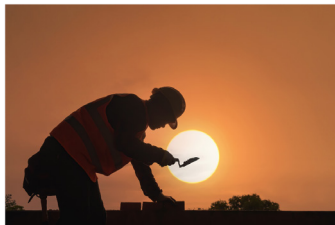
## The Factors

Several factors contribute to the high prevalence of mental health conditions in the construction industry.

Approximately 15% of construction workers in the United States struggle with a substance use disorder, which is notably higher than the 8.6% rate observed in the general adult population.<sup>2</sup>

Additional issues that may contribute to the high rates include:<sup>3</sup>

- **Physical exhaustion:** Construction is a labor-intensive job that can be physically demanding. When workers suffer from continual exhaustion, it can impact their emotional well-being.
- **Injuries:** Construction workers are more prone to physical injuries than many other occupations. These injuries can be severe and lead to chronic pain, which may affect mental health. If workers are prescribed medication for pain management, it may also increase the risk of substance abuse.
- **Long working hours:** Construction workers are often on the job site for 10 to 12 hours per day, depending on the project. This leaves little time for other activities, like spending time with family, exercising, and participating in hobbies.
- **Seasonal layoffs:** Because construction is seasonal in many areas, it is common for construction workers to be out of work for a portion of the year. This can cause financial stress, which may lead to poor mental health.



## Resources

- Construction Suicide Prevention Partnership – Toolbox Talks [suicide-stops-here.org/toolbox-talks/](https://suicide-stops-here.org/toolbox-talks/)
- Paul Lawson Helps [paullawsonhelps.com/](https://paullawsonhelps.com/)
- The Builders Exchange of Ohio [bx.org/](https://bx.org/)
- BX Blueprints for Well-being Council [bx.org/bx-groups.php](https://bx.org/bx-groups.php)
- VitalCog: Suicide Prevention in Construction Training [vitalcog.com/suicide-prevention-in-construction/](https://vitalcog.com/suicide-prevention-in-construction/)
- Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention [preventconstruction-suicide.com/](https://preventconstruction-suicide.com/)

## Support for Mental Health

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are crucial for supporting the mental health and well-being of employees. They provide confidential access to professional counseling, resources, and support for various personal and work-related issues. EAPs help employees address mental health challenges, reduce stress, and improve overall job satisfaction.

However, the average utilization rate for EAPs in the construction industry is around 4.5%. Low usage rates can be due to several factors, including lack of awareness and promotion, confidentiality, and mental health stigma.

## 4 Things Everyone Should Know

Like other workplace fatalities, suicides are preventable. Everyone in the construction industry has a part to play in efforts to prevent suicide.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. *Everyone can help prevent loss by suicide.*

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 something is wrong.

### 2. *Know the warning signs of suicide.*

There is no single cause for suicide but there are warning signs. Changes in behavior, mood, social media posts, or even what they say may signal someone is at risk. Take these signs seriously. It could save a life.

### 3. *Ask “Are you okay?”*

If you are concerned about a coworker, talk with them privately, be compassionate, and listen without judgment. Encourage them to reach out to your EAP, Member Assistance Program (MAP), the human resources department, or a mental health professional.

### 4. *If someone is in crisis, stay with them and get help.*

Contact emergency services or the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

## References

- 1 McCleery T, Earnest S, Socias-Morales C, Garza E. Partnering to Prevent Suicide in the Construction Industry – Building Hope and a Road to Recovery. Published September 9, 2020. Accessed November 1, 2024. <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/09/09/suicide-in-construction/>
- 2 Substance Use and Substance Use Disorder by Industry. [https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report\\_1959/ShortReport-1959.html](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_1959/ShortReport-1959.html). Accessed November 1, 2024.
- 3 Rivelli E, Kunken J. Improving mental health in construction: resources & tools. <https://www.procore.com/library/mental-health-construction>. Accessed November 1, 2024.
- 4 Suicide Prevention in Construction: 5 Things You Should Know. <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA4446.pdf>. Accessed November 1, 2024.

## ABOUT OHIO SUICIDE PREVENTION FOUNDATION

Ohio Suicide Prevention Foundation (OSPF) educates, advocates for, and builds connections and support for individuals, families, and communities to prevent suicide.



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