TOOLBOX TALK
LETHAL MEANS SAFETY

When talking about suicide risk, you can take simple steps to protect yourself and your family, particularly if you or others in the household are in crisis or experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors. Lethal Means Safety is an important public health issue that can affect your health and your family's well-being. While firearms and medications are usually handled responsibly, they can become deadly if an individual is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide.

BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2023, 55% of all Americans who died by suicide used a firearm. (CDC)
- Researchers have consistently found that when you reduce access to or improve or enhance the safety of the means by which individuals attempt suicide, you reduce suicide.

WHY IT MATTERS

Contrary to popular belief, people who are suicidal don't generally seek other ways to attempt suicide if they can't access the method they were going to use. Nor will they attempt suicide if safeguards are in place to make using that method more difficult. Creating a safe home environment for those with suicidal thoughts or tendencies can greatly reduce the likelihood of death by suicide.

GOOD TO KNOW

- Safe storage practices include using cable or trigger locks, storing firearms in a locked case or safe, and storing firearms and ammunition separately and locked. Safe storage options can be researched at the National Shooting Sports Foundation website: www.nssf.org/safety and the Department of Veterans Affairs website: www.keepitsecure.net.
- If you or someone you know has a firearm and is at immediate risk for suicide, temporarily removing firearms from the home may be the best way to ensure safety.
- Another way to stay safe is to keep only as much prescription medication as needed. Store any sedative, narcotic, or opioid medications under lock and key. Additionally, discard any outdated or unneeded medications. Consult with your local pharmacy to find nearby medication disposal drop boxes.
- Also during a crisis, remove other household items that could be used to harm oneself, such as ropes, cords, and sharp objects.

CONSTRUCTION SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK

Call, text or chat 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Find resources at **ConstructionSuicidePrevention.com**.

TOOLBOX TALK

Taking Care of What's Under the Hard Hat

We spend a lot of time protecting ourselves on jobsites – hard hats, steel-toed boots, fall protection and more. But the most important thing under that hard hat often goes unprotected: your mental health. Self-care is not a luxury. On a jobsite, it is a safety skill.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Construction workers die by suicide at a rate 5x higher than all other work-related fatalities (CDC/BLS).

- Workers who are chronically sleep-deprived are 70% more likely to be involved in a workplace accident (NSF).

WHY IT MATTERS

Mental health affects focus, decision-making and reaction time – all critical on a jobsite. When we ignore what is going on inside, we put ourselves and our crew at risk. Taking care of yourself is taking care of the people next to you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Tips to take care of what's under your hard hat:

- **Sleep:** Seven to nine hours is needed to keep your mind sharp - it's a tool necessary for peak performance. Sleep deprivation slows reaction time and increases injury risk. Protect your sleep like you protect your equipment.

- **Food and water:** Skipping meals or running on caffeine alone affects concentration and decision-making. Your brain needs fuel to do its job safely.

- **Connection:** Isolation is one of the biggest risk factors for mental health struggles. Check-in with your crew. A two-minute conversation can matter more than you know.

- **Know your warning signs:** Constant exhaustion, pulling away from others, increased drinking or feeling like nothing matters – these are signals of mental health distress worth paying attention to. Do one thing today! You do not have to overhaul your life. Drink an extra glass of water. Go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Text someone you care about. Small steps add up. You cannot pour from an empty hard hat.

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TOOLBOX TALK
Redefining TOUGH

What "tough" used to mean in the construction industry: suffering in silence; working through pain, stress and exhaustion; hiding emotions; never asking for help; and believing vulnerability was weakness. Times are changing.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 64% of U.S. construction workers reported anxiety or depression in the past 12 months (Clayco Mental Health Survey).
- While ~60% of employees struggle, only a third communicated this to their employers (NAMI).
- Top reasons for staying silent include stigma/shame (78%) and fear of judgment (77%) (American Psychiatric Association's Center for Workplace Mental Health).

WHY IT MATTERS

Remember, it's okay to ask for help, and it's okay to offer it. We are redefining what tough means within the construction industry and beyond.

GOOD TO KNOW

Here is what **TOUGH** means now in the construction industry:

- **Talk it Out:** Don't keep it bottled up. Real toughness is having the courage to speak up when you're struggling – and to listen when someone else needs it.

- **Outside Activity:** Get outside for your well-being, not just for work. Fresh air, movement and a break from the grind can boost your mood and reduce stress.

- **Unplug:** Step away from screens, news and job stress when you can. Take a moment to clear your head and reset – your mental health matters.

- **Give Back:** Whether it's helping a coworker, mentoring a younger crew member or checking in on someone, giving back connects us and creates purpose.

- **Hang Out:** You don't have to do it alone. Spend time with family, friends or coworkers outside of work. Connection is one of the best protections against suicide.

Being tough isn't about pushing through alone. It's about standing strong together. Take five minutes. Talk it out. Check on your crew. Real strength is taking care of yourself and each other. Let's continue to watch out for one another.

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TOOLBOX TALK
NALOXONE (AKA NARCAN) NASAL SPRAY

The construction industry has a high rate of opioid misuse. Why? This is due to several factors in construction, such as musculoskeletal injuries and chronic pain; limited access to paid leave, which can lead workers to rely on opioids to stay working; and stigma that can prevent workers from seeking help. The medication naloxone (commonly known as Narcan) is highly effective in reversing opioid overdoses when administered promptly.

BY THE NUMBERS

- Construction workers represent ~8% of the U.S. workforce, but account for ~17% of overdose deaths. (CPWR)
- In 2023, there were ~15k opioid-related overdose deaths among U.S. construction workers (age 16-64). (CPWR)
- Naloxone can restore normal breathing within two to three minutes in most opioid overdose cases. (NIH)

WHY IT MATTERS

Having access to Narcan, knowing the warning signs, and being ready to administer Narcan could be lifesaving.

GOOD TO KNOW

Opioid overdose signs include small or constricted pinpoint pupils, falling asleep or losing consciousness, slow or no breathing, choking or gurgling sounds, limp body, cold or clammy skin, or discolored skin (especially lip/nails).

If you assess there are signs of an opioid overdose, follow these instructions to administer the Narcan nasal spray:

- Check for response.
- Obtain the Narcan.
- Give the Narcan as quickly as possible by administering one spray in the person's nostril (more than one dose might be needed).
- Try to keep the person awake and breathing.
- Call 911 immediately.
- Lay the person on their side to prevent choking, and stay with the person until help arrives.

Note: While Naloxone is effective against opioids (e.g., oxycodone, fentanyl, heroin), it does not reverse overdoses caused by non-opioid substances like benzodiazepines or stimulants.

Naloxone can (but does not always) cause withdrawal symptoms (such as fever, anxiety, rapid heart rate, sweating, nausea, etc.) or unpleasant physical reactions. That's why you call 911 to secure emergency support!

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