



Talking About Suicide in Construction: Safe Messaging Guidelines

August 13, 2025

Moderator: Chris Trahan Cain, CIH, Executive Director, CPWR

Panelists:

Sonya Bohmann, Executive Director, CIASP


Jessica Bunting, MPH, Research to Practice Director, CPWR; Member, CIASP
Board of Trustees

Housekeeping


- Today's webinar will be recorded and automatically shared via follow-up email.
- The recording and slides will also be posted on cpwr.com/webinars.
- Attendees are automatically muted! Please submit panelist questions via the Q&A box.
- Spanish audio is available via simultaneous interpretation

Simultaneous Interpretation (Interpretación simultánea)

WINDOWS - MAC (Navegador web/Browser)


1. En los controles del seminario web, haga clic en **Interpretación** 
2. Haga clic en el idioma que desee escuchar.
3. (Opcional) Para escuchar solo el idioma interpretado, haga clic en **Silenciar audio original**.

Nota: Hay que unirse al audio del seminario web a través de audio o VoIP de la computadora. No podrá escuchar la interpretación de idiomas si utiliza las funciones de audio de teléfono [llamada directa](#) o [recibir llamada](#).


1. In your webinar controls, click **Interpretation** 
2. Click the language that you would like to hear.
3. (Optional) To hear the interpreted language only, click **Mute Original Audio**.

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ANDROID - iOS (Aplicación móvil/Mobile App)

1. En los controles del seminario web, toque los puntos suspensivos 
2. Toque **Interpretación de idiomas**.
3. Toque el idioma que desee escuchar.
4. (Opcional) Toque el botón de alternancia **Silenciar audio original**.
5. Haga clic en **Finalizado**.

Nota: No podrá escuchar la interpretación de idiomas si utiliza las funciones de audio de teléfono [llamada directa](#) o [recibir llamada](#).

1. In your webinar controls, tap the ellipses 
2. Tap **Language Interpretation**.
3. Tap the language you want to hear.
4. (Optional) Tap the toggle to **Mute Original Audio**.
5. Click **Done**.

Note: You cannot listen to language interpretation if you use the [dial-in](#) or [call me](#) phone audio features.



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Project Background

Sonya Bohmann, Executive Director, CIASP
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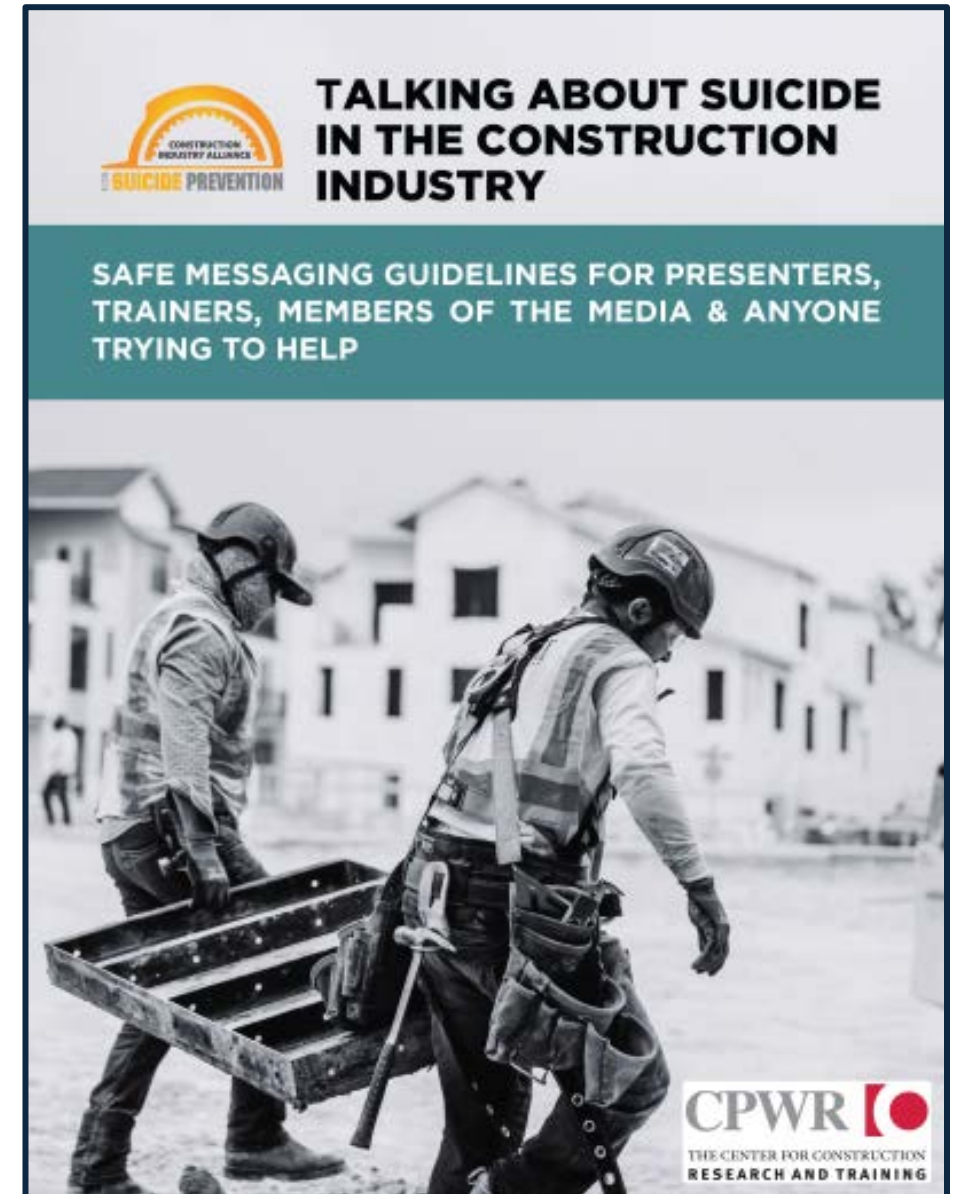


Background

- The Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention (CIASP) identified a **need for more consistency in the conversation around suicide prevention** to:
 - Empower anyone to talk about it.
 - Avoid using stigmatizing language whenever possible.
 - Present a full and accurate picture of suicide in the construction industry and its contributing factors.
- Around the same time, CPWR wanted **identify good practices for presenting on suicide prevention to groups that have likely been impacted by mental health struggles**, either their own or those of friends, family, or coworkers.

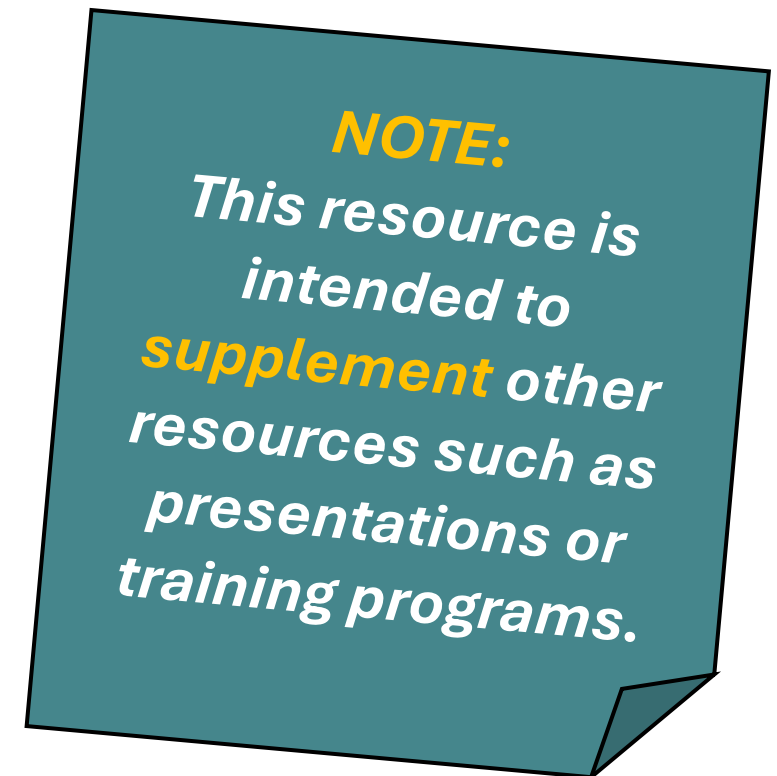
Background

- CIASP took on the task of developing a list of those good practices
- Developed by the **CIASP Education Committee** with feedback from the BOT and friends.
- **Special thanks to the following specific individuals:**
 - Justin Azbill, the Tribal Group
 - Jessica Bunting, CPWR-The Center for Construction Research and Training
 - Kabri Lehrman-Schmid
 - Heath Troyer
 - Wesley Wheeler, National Electrical contractors Association






Safe Messaging Guide

- Available for **FREE** via both organizations' websites (visit cpwr.com or preventconstructionsuicide.com)
- **Goal:** Better prepare you for discussions around suicide and mental health.
- **First and Foremost:** **Don't beat yourself up if you make a mistake with the terminology or if you feel a bit awkward checking in with a colleague.** Just being yourself, showing empathy, and being prepared to provide support if needed is enough.



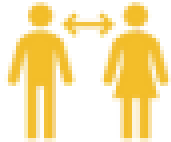
Four Main Sections

- *Conversations around suicide prevention look different depending on the context.*
- **Three primary sections for different contexts:**
 -  one set for **members of the media**,
 -  one set for **presenters, trainers, and other individuals speaking in group settings**,
 -  and one set for **anyone having a one-on-one conversation** with someone believed to be struggling.
- **A final section offers ideas for self-care after hard conversations**

Key Tips for Any Setting



Check in with yourself before presenting, training, or starting a conversation about mental health. Are you feeling up to it?



Be yourself. Bring your authentic, human self to the conversation and approach it with empathy and sincerity. Each person may need a different approach when they are struggling, so the most important thing is to be real and listen to express support.



Validate any problems or challenges someone is facing while providing and maintaining hope. Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem, even when it may not feel that way in the moment.



Be prepared to assist those struggling as they take the first steps to seek professional help or additional peer support. Even if it's simply being there while they call 988, it's critical to ensure someone gets the help they've asked for.

Safe Messaging Sections

Jessica Bunting, MPH, Research to Practice (r2p) Director, CPWR

jbunting@cpwr.com



Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Media



ON AIR

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Media

- ✓ **Consult CIASP's glossary of terms** for clarification on mental health and construction terminology.
- ✓ **Use terms like “died by suicide” or “ended one's life” instead of “committed suicide” or “successful attempt”.** Individuals who die by suicide are victims just like those who die from injury or illness.
- ✓ **Be aware that contributing factors to suicide and mental health are complex.** Avoid oversimplifying suicide deaths by making audiences aware of the many possible contributing factors and the complicated relationships between them.

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Media

- ✓ **Avoid details about methods.** Knowing the specifics of how a person died adds nothing useful to the conversation and can instead be an activator for those struggling personally or with the loss of a loved one.
- ✓ **Avoid identifying individuals unless it is necessary, and you have express permission from family.** Is there a reason to include the victim's name, location, or other identifying information?



Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions



Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions

- ✓ **Complete a self-check or audit before beginning.** Evaluate your own capacity and ability to support others.
- ✓ **Prepare the Environment:**
 - **Create a Safe Space:** Arrange the room to encourage a sense of safety and openness.
 - **Visual and Auditory Comfort:** Ensure good lighting, comfortable seating, and minimal distractions. Consider using calming background music or visuals before and after the session.

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions

- ✓ **Start the presentation or discussion with an acknowledgement that the conversation may be challenging and may bring up past or current trauma for the audience.** Offer the option to leave the room at any time and consider having “helpers” to check in on audience members as needed.

“Suicide prevention can be a difficult topic, and the discussion may feel too uncomfortable for some. That is completely fine; please feel free to leave the room at any time and for however long you need. If you’re just going to the bathroom or making a phone call, go ahead and give us a thumbs up, but if it looks like you might need some assistance, one of our helpers at the back of the room will come check in with you.”

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions

- ✓ **Be prepared to offer support and/or assistance to audience members seeking additional support.** When leading a discussion, you should have some baseline knowledge on how to seek support for suicide prevention, mental health issues such as depression, and substance use disorder.

Calling 988 is often the first step, however it is even better to be able to provide local resources to make sure no one is left hanging.



findtreatment.gov/locator

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions

- ✓ **Set ground rules.** While audience discussion and sharing of stories can be beneficial to the group, it is important to avoid delving into group members' past trauma in a setting where:
 - (a) others might be activated, and
 - (b) there is insufficient time and/or professional expertise available to dissect and address the trauma(s) at that specific moment in time.
- ✓ **Avoid glorifying suicide or presenting it as a viable option.** Instead, focus on a message of hope.

Safe Messaging Around Suicide in the Group Trainings & Discussions

- ✓ **Be comprehensive when talking about contributing factors to suicide and the complexity of mental health.** Avoid discussing the causes of any specific suicide deaths, but do make audiences aware of contributing factors and the complicated relationships between them.
- ✓ **End with a Call to Action**
 - **Personal Takeaways:** Ask participants to write down one thing they will do to support mental health in their workplace or personal life.
 - **Commitment to Change:** Encourage leaders and workers to make mental health a recurring topic at safety meetings.

Safely Talking About Suicide with an Individual Who Might Be At Risk



Safely Talking About Suicide with an Individual Who Might Be At Risk

- ✓ **Consider who you are speaking with.** Is it a friend? An employee? An acquaintance? The nature of your relationship will likely impact your approach.



- ✓ **Be yourself.** Bring your authentic, human self to the conversation and approach it with empathy and sincerity. Each person is different and may need a different approach or type of support, so the most important thing is to **be real, listen, and express hope.**

Safely Talking About Suicide with an Individual Who Might Be At Risk

- ✓ **Share your story as is appropriate.** If you have first-hand experience with mental health struggles, it can be helpful to share that with someone struggling – as long as you focus on a message of hope!
- ✓ **Avoid glorifying suicide or presenting it as a viable option.** Again, focus on a message of hope.
- ✓ **Validate any problems or challenges someone is facing without validating suicide as a legitimate option.**
- ✓ **Be prepared to assist someone in taking the first steps to seeking professional help or additional peer support.**

Post-Conversation Self-Care



Post-Conversation Self-Care

- ✓ **Acknowledge Your Emotions.** It's normal to feel a range of emotions after such a conversation, including worry, sadness, or even guilt.
- ✓ **Debrief with a Trusted Person:** Share your experience with a trusted friend, family member, or counselor to help relieve emotional tension. *While debriefing, avoid disclosing details that could breach the privacy of the person you supported.*
- ✓ **Engage in Stress-Relieving Activities:** Go for a walk, stretch, or engage in exercise to release built-up stress. Paint, write, or play music to channel your emotions into something productive. Try deep breathing, meditation, or yoga to calm your mind and body.



Post-Conversation Self-Care



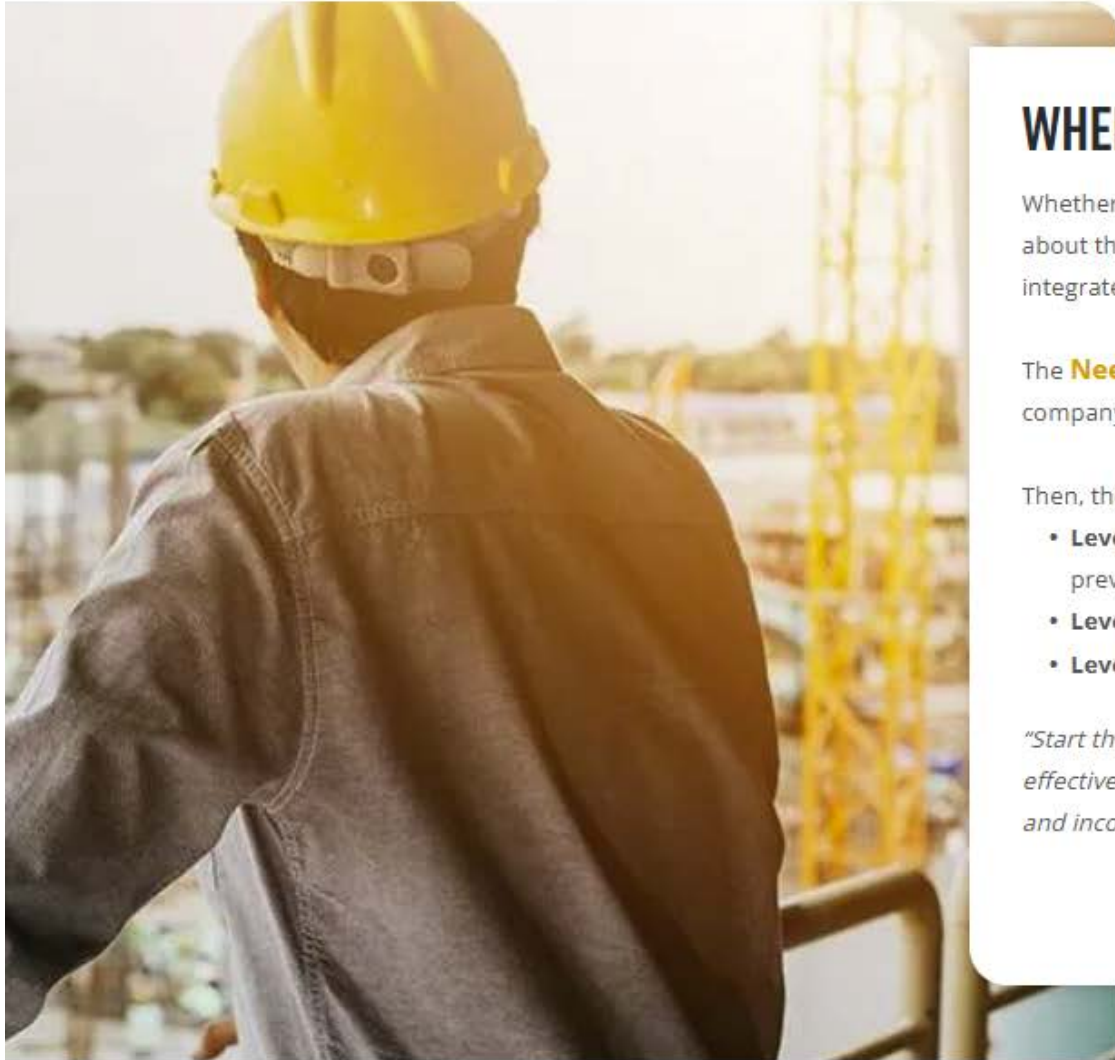
- ✓ **Set Boundaries for Future Conversations**
 - **Reflect on Your Limits:** Consider what went well and what felt overwhelming during the conversation.
 - **Recognize When to Refer:** Understand that it's okay to direct someone to professional help if you feel you've reached your emotional limit.
- ✓ **Seek Professional Support Therapy or Counseling:** If the conversation leaves a lasting emotional impact, consider speaking with a mental health professional or joining peer support groups.

Post-Conversation Self-Care

- ✓ **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on something positive in your life to help balance your emotions.
- ✓ **Monitor Your Own Mental Health Check for Signs of Burnout:** Schedule downtime to recharge when needed.
- ✓ **Educate Yourself Further Learn More:** Read about suicide prevention, active listening, and self-care techniques to build confidence and reduce stress in future conversations.
- ✓ **Remind Yourself of Your Impact Focus on What You Did Right:** Remember, your willingness to listen and offer support could have made a significant difference in someone's life. It's okay not to have all the answers. Your empathy and presence were invaluable.

Additional CIASP Resources

www.preventconstruction.com/suicide.com/



WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

Whether your organization has taken the **pledge to STAND up for suicide prevention**, or if you're just learning about the critical need to address suicide prevention in construction, CIASP has compiled tools and resources to help integrate suicide prevention into your company's culture as a safety and health priority.

The **Needs Analysis and Integration Checklist** walks you through a series of questions to help evaluate your company's suicide preparedness.

Then, the **three-level document** provides clear and simple steps to help your company address suicide prevention:

- **Level 1** includes basic steps toward establishing a program to address employee mental health and suicide prevention.
- **Level 2** grows the initial steps into a deeper commitment to the process.
- **Level 3** outlines steps to create a company wide culture to address mental health and suicide prevention.

"Start the conversation with the CIASP Needs Analysis & Implementation Tool. It guides your discussion and builds an effective implementation plan. Every culture is different—use the tool to design a plan that best fits your organization and incorporates protective factors."

-- Joe Xavier
Senior Director of Health and Safety
ABC- Associated Builders and Contractors

Additional CIASP Resources



BUILD AWARENESS

- **Construction + Suicide Prevention: Why Is This an Industry Imperative?**
- **Construction + Suicide Prevention: 10 Action Steps Companies Can Take to Save Lives**
- **Construction's Silent Killer Part 1 - Why is the Industry's Suicide Rate So High?**
- **Mental Health on the Jobsite.**
- **Start the Conversation video.**
- **CIASP ToolBox Talks**

"The CIASP tools for supporting mental health have been a lifeline for me.. Your commitment to providing accessible and effective resources is commendable. Thank you for empowering Construction Managers like me to support our workers mental health and well-being. Your tools have made a profound impact on our ability to talk about suicide awareness and prevention, and I am grateful for your unwavering dedication, support, and genuine dedication to our industry."

-- Jamie Evans
Senior Safety Director- New England
Turner Construction

Additional CIASP Resources: Videos

The following videos may be used for individual viewing to become more informed, to supplement a presentation or webinar, or to incorporate into your employee training. The information has been divided into six videos to make it easier to disseminate and customize the use of the material.



Part 1:
Why Suicide Prevention in Construction?



Part 2:
CIASP Overview



Part 3:
Suicide and Mental Health Impact



Part 4:
Risk Factors



Part 5:
Warning Signs and What to Do



Part 6:
Suicide Prevention in the Workplace

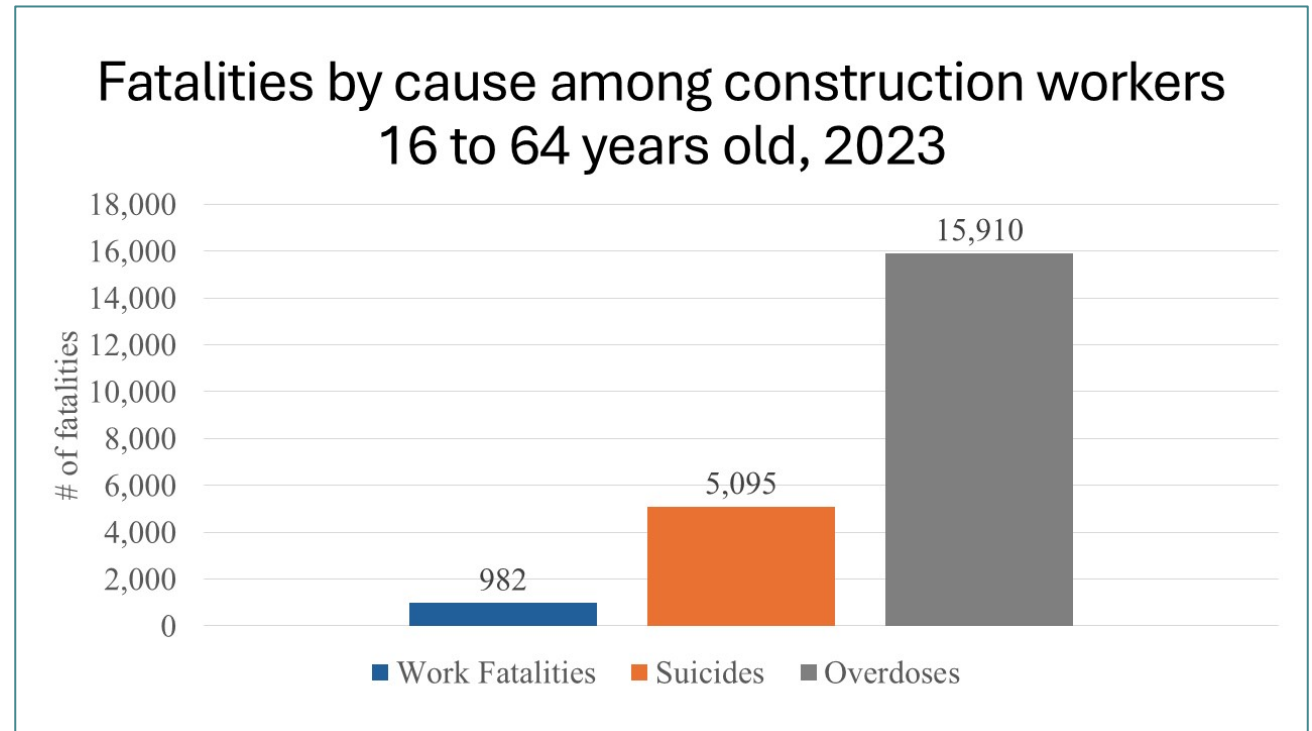
Additional CPWR Resources

<https://cpwr.com/mentalhealth>

CPWR has developed **free, practical tools to help prevent opioid overdoses and suicides and to improve worker well-being**. We've contributed to the peer-reviewed literature on these topics as well.

These tools and research outputs are split into two sections:

- [Resources to Prevent Opioid Deaths in Construction](#)
- [Resources to Prevent Suicide Deaths in Construction](#)



CPWR Research on Opioids & Suicide

- Peer Advocacy Study
- Reframing Primary Prevention Report
- Data Bulletins, Dashboards, and other Resources
- Bullying Surveys & Report
- 5 Small Studies




Data Bulletins

<https://www.cpwr.com/research/data-center/data-reports/>



Fourth Quarter – Overdose Fatalities at Worksites and Opioid Use in the Construction Industry

-  [Quarter4-QDR-2019](#)
-  [Charts in Powerpoint](#)



Construction Worker Mental Health During the COVID-19 Pandemic

-  [DataBulletin-January2022](#)
-  [DataBulletin-January2022-Charts](#)
-  [DataBulletin-January2022-ChartData](#)





Leading Causes of All Deaths Among Current, Retired, and Former Construction Workers

-  [DataBulletin-January2023](#)
-  [DataBulletin-January2023-Charts](#)
-  [DataBulletin-January2023-ChartData](#)



Mental Health Trends in the Construction Industry: A Look at Anxiety, Depression, Psychological Distress, Suicides, and Overdoses

-  [DataBulletin-September2024](#)
-  [DataBulletin-September2024-Charts](#)
-  [DataBulletin-September2024-ChartData](#)



Construction Worker Injuries, Overdoses, and Suicides

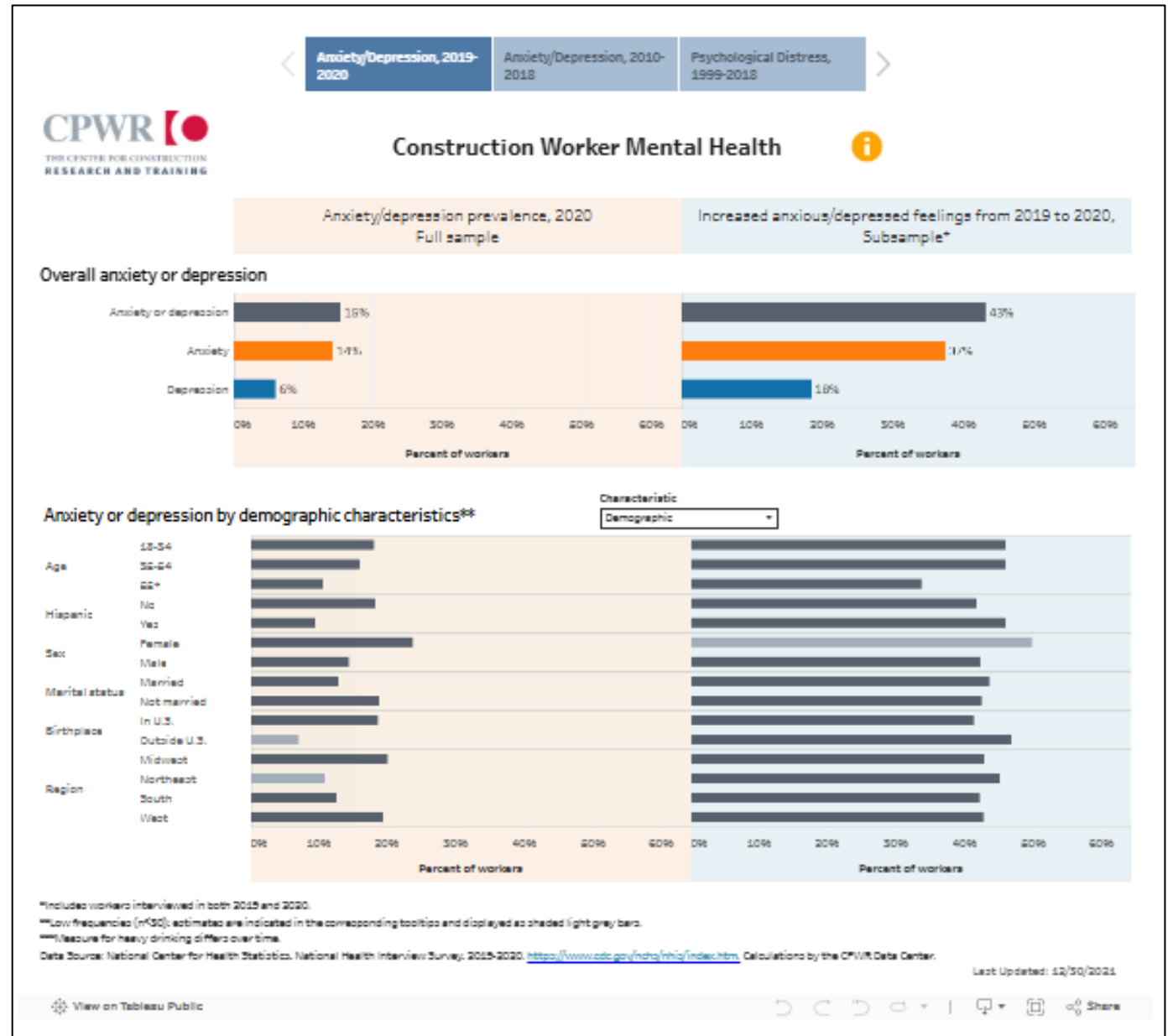
-  [DataBulletin-April2025](#)
-  [DataBulletin-April2025-Charts](#)
-  [DataBulletin-April2025-ChartData](#)



Data Dashboards

<https://www.cpwr.com/research/data-center/data-dashboards/construction-worker-mental-health/>

<https://www.cpwr.com/research/data-center/the-construction-chart-book/interactive-7th/injuries-illnesses-health/>



CPWR Training & Outreach Resources

- Toolbox Talks
- Hazard Alert Cards
- Infographics
- Webinars
- Opioid Awareness Training Program
- Worker Resilience Training Program
- Physician's Alert

Suicide Prevention in Construction

Over the last several years, the rate of suicide has increased, and it is now the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S. The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates compared to other industries. Although there is no simple reason for this increase, learning the warning signs and how to reach out for help could save your life or the life of a co-worker.

John and Matt's Story

Matt noticed that his co-worker John was acting differently, becoming easily upset, not following safe practices on the job, and eating lunch alone. He recognized that these may be the warning signs of suicide. During lunch he called a crisis hotline and asked for advice on how to talk to John and get him help. At the end of the day, Matt approached John and said that he had noticed a change in his mood and behavior lately and was concerned. He asked John if he has had any thoughts of suicide and told him about the hotline. John was angry at first, but then admitted that he had been feeling depressed and is relieved that he can talk to someone about it. Matt convinced John to call the crisis hotline. John is now getting the help he needs, and Matt is continuing to provide support.

- Have you known someone who expressed thoughts or died by suicide?
- What are examples of the warning signs?
- How can we help a co-worker when they are thinking about suicide?

Remember This

Recognize the Warning Signs:

Talking about:

- Wanting to die
- Guilt or shame
- Being a burden to others

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or connect with a crisis counselor.

How can we stay safe to ourselves and others?

What can we do today to help?

-
-

Together we can help **Prevent Suicide in Construction.**

The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates.

Learn about the warning signs and how to start a conversation at tinyurl.com/cpwr-suicideprevention.

Remember, **You are not alone.**

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text "HELLO" to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor.

OPIOID DEATHS IN CONSTRUCTION

Construction Workers at Risk?

The construction industry has one of the highest injury rates and is one of the most common industries when prescribed to treat the pain caused by these injuries. Opioid use can make people more sensitive to pain and increase the risk of an opioid's pain-reducing effects.

According to the CDC, 1 out of 4 people prescribed opioids for long-term pain become addicted.

Protect Yourself! Prevent Injuries

Work shouldn't hurt. Your employer should be committed to a safe job site, and you should use safe practices. Together these reduce the risk of injuries and therefore the need for pain medication.

Getting help lifting heavy materials can reduce the risk for injury.

Talk to a Doctor

Opioids are addictive and can have side effects.

Ask about:

- Other forms of pain medication that are not addictive and have fewer side effects.
- Other forms of pain management such as physical therapy or acupuncture.

Opioids should be the last option to treat your pain. If opioids are prescribed they should be used for the shortest possible time. Safely dispose of any unused medications.

Get Help

Opioids change how your brain works, triggering one part of it to demand more opioids and changing another part of it so it's harder to resist. Check with your union or employer to find out if they have a program to help, such as:

- An employee assistance program (EAP); or
- Member assistance program (MAP).

If you're having trouble stopping using opioids, check with your union or your doctor for help to find the best addiction treatment option for you.

Remember addiction is an illness that can be treated.

Call this confidential national hotline:
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

If you or someone you know needs help:

Contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at <https://www.samhsa.gov> or call their confidential national toll-free helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

Find out more about construction hazards. To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics, call 301-578-8500 or email cpwr-r2p@cpwr.com.

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THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
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Thank You! Questions?