

HAZARD ALERT

CPWR [O]
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Suicide Prevention IN CONSTRUCTION



The Data

Suicide can affect anyone. There were 45,979 deaths by suicide across the U.S. in 2020 – **an average of 125 a day, or five every hour.**¹

Construction workers, particularly males, are at an even higher risk for suicide than the average American worker, and this applies at every level—laborers, skilled trades, and management.

Based on a CDC report on suicide rates by industry and occupation, there were an estimated 5,200 suicide deaths in construction in 2016, compared to 1,000 deaths from job site incidents.² Men in the industry die from suicide at **twice the rate** of workers on average.³

There is no simple answer to why suicide is so common, particularly among construction workers. However, there are steps that workers and employers can take to recognize the warning signs and help prevent suicides.

Sources: 1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Fatal Injury Data, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Accessed July 14, 2022. <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/fatal-leading>. 2) Estimated using values from Suicide Rates by Industry and Occupation — National Violent Death Reporting System, 32 States, 2016 | MMWR (cdc.gov) applied to all states. 3) CDC article.

Recognize the Warning Signs

According to mental health professionals, the following are common warning signs that a person may be thinking about suicide¹:

Talking about wanting to die, guilt or shame, or being a burden to others.

Feeling:

- ▶ Empty, hopeless, or having no reason to live
- ▶ Extremely sad, anxious, agitated, or angry
- ▶ Unbearable emotional or physical pain

Behavior:

- ▶ Planning or researching ways to die; buying a gun
- ▶ Withdrawing from friends, family, or activities, saying goodbye, giving away possessions, or making a will
- ▶ Agitation or rage – increased conflict among co-workers²
- ▶ Extreme mood swings
- ▶ Changes in personality or neglecting their appearance
- ▶ Taking dangerous risks, such as increased alcohol or drug use or driving recklessly
- ▶ Eating or sleeping more or less
- ▶ Increased tardiness and absenteeism from work²

Sources: 1) National Institute of Mental Health. Warning Signs of Suicide. <https://bit.ly/22502o2> 2) Construction Financial Management Association. Face Suicide Warning Signs Before It's Too Late. <https://bit.ly/34f59v>

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is now 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:



988 is the new three-digit number that users can call or text to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The 800 number will continue to work for phone calls.

Find out more about construction hazards.

To receive copies of this Hazard Alert and cards on other topics

call **301-578-8500** or visit cpwr.com/hazardalerts



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Help Prevent Suicide...

1 Reach Out

If you notice the warning signs of suicide in someone you know, **talk to them – start a conversation.** Ask them about a specific warning sign you've noticed. For example, *"I've noticed lately that you are sitting alone at lunch and avoiding all of us while we're at work, and I am concerned."* You may feel uncomfortable, but the best way to find out if someone is having suicidal thoughts is to **ask them directly**, *"Are you thinking about suicide?"* Asking this will not put the idea into their head or make it more likely that they will attempt suicide.

If the answer is "Yes," do not leave them alone and call for help.

Source: California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA). Know the Signs. <https://www.suicideispreventable.org>

2 Respond

When talking to someone who may be thinking about suicide, **take what they say seriously.** Listen without judgement, and express concern and support. **Be direct.** Talk openly and matter-of-factly about suicide. Do not ask questions encouraging them to deny their feelings, such as: *"You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"* **Reassure them that help is available.**

DO NOT:

- ✗ Tell the person to do it
- ✗ Debate the value of living or argue that suicide is right or wrong.
- ✗ Minimize their problems by saying things like *"You'll get over it," "Toughen up,"* or *"You're fine."*
- ✗ Promise to keep their thoughts about suicide a secret.

Source: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Help Someone Else. <https://bit.ly/2xagCP1>

3 Connect

Encourage the person to see a mental health professional:

- ▶ Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline for advice and referrals; or
- ▶ Help them locate a treatment facility or program.

Stay in touch with them after a crisis to see how they are doing.

Remind them:

▶ YOU ARE NOT ALONE. THERE IS HOPE. SUICIDE IS NOT THE ANSWER.

If someone is in immediate danger, call 911, take them to a nearby emergency room, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 988 or 1-800-273-8255, or reach out to the **Crisis Text Line** by texting "HOME" to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor.

To Learn More About Preventing Suicides, Visit:

CPWR – Suicide Prevention Resources:

cpwr.com/suicide-prevention

Construction Industry

Alliance for Suicide Prevention:

bit.ly/3ziurt8

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention:

afsp.org/

If You or Someone You Know Needs Immediate Help, Contact:

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

Provides free and confidential support from trained counselors 24/7.

- ▶ Call or text 988

- ▶ Use the online Lifeline Chat at: 988lifeline.org/chat/.

Crisis Text Line:

Text "HOME" to 741741 for free, 24/7 confidential support.