

Stepping Up To Save Lives

... A Guide for Organizations on Suicide Prevention in Construction and Building Support for Mental Wellness : ...



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**A community service program from Culture Coach International and
the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention**



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PreventConstructionSuicide.com

The Stepping Up To Save Lives Program

This program is the result of organizations coming together with a shared concern over the high level of suicides in the construction industry. The initiative is stewarded by Culture Coach International, and everyone involved in this project has donated their time and resources.

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CCI can create custom videos for your company too. Imagine having an avatar of your director of safety providing video toolbox talks! Videos can be used for:

- Toolbox talks on safety or stand-down topics
- Incorporating communication and jobsite briefings into platforms such as Hammertech or SiteForm
- Team building and team effectiveness education on topics such as active listening, providing feedback, developing trust and fostering psychological safety

If you want to bring your training programs, toolbox talks or Jobsite communications to the next level, contact: Kari Heistad, CEO of Culture Coach International: Kari@CultureCoach.biz CultureCoach.biz/construction



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Introduction

The construction industry is facing a serious challenge with the level of suicides happening across the United States. With 14 people a day being lost each day to suicide. These losses represent loved ones, family members, friends and colleagues. On jobsites the losses impact morale, safety and production schedule.

This guide has been written as a companion piece to the “Stepping Up to Save Lives” program which includes a 5 minute video, posters and a facilitator’s guide. This organizational guide is focused on helping organizations to support the implementation of the *Stepping Up to Save Lives* program through information that can be used to create organizational support for mental wellbeing and suicide prevention.

Focusing on mental health makes good business sense. For every dollar invested in mental health, there is return on investment of \$4-8.

There are many organizations working to address the high level of suicides in construction and they have materials designed to support programs in your company. A list of resources is included in this guide for further work.

Guide Contents

For Organizations

- Best Practices for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
- Sample Leadership Speech
- Construction Statistics and Impact
- The Impact of Suicide on the Construction Industry
- Articles
- Resources for Organizations

For Facilitators

A full copy of the Facilitator’s Guide is included in the second part of this guide

- Using the Stepping Up To Save Lives Video
- Using the Video as a Stand Alone Tool via Email or in a Platform
- Using the Video in a Stand Down or Group Setting
- Facilitator Tips
- Facilitator Next Steps
- Resources for Individuals
- National hotline 988 Poster



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Organization Best Practices

Suicide prevention efforts are best done with a year-round focus on mental health. This isn't a topic for just one day or one month, but one which requires sustained focus and attention to make a true change and impact on the workplace.

Supporting Facilitators

Provide your facilitators with materials to help them as they lead a discussion or stand down. Make sure that they have information about internal resources people can access, a number for people to use if they are concerned for themselves or a colleague, and the information about your EAP program and what mental health support they can provide. If someone is not comfortable leading the discussion on their own, team them up with other people or find other resources, such as local organizations, to present this topic for them. In all cases, make sure that they know they are supported and what resources are available to them.

Trained Facilitators

If you are going to integrate mental health into your organizational culture, consider having a group of employees receive extra training so that they are able to facilitate more in-depth conversations or to provide onsite support. Alternatively, consider setting up a partnership with a local mental health organization to use their services for support.

Best Practices for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

- **Visible Senior Leadership Support:** Senior leaders who show that they are actively supporting mental health, suicide prevention and creating a culture that supports mental health without a stigma attached is important to creating and sustaining long term change.
- **Psychological Safety:** Create an environment where employees feel safe discussing mental health without fear of career consequences or discrimination. This requires clear policies and consistent messaging. And, it requires consistency with managers and leaders who work to provide an environment where people feel they can share their emotions. If you are interested in learning more about psychological safety in construction, there are several resources on the Culture Coach website to help with developing psychological safety and Culture Coach also has expertise in helping organizations to create psychologically safe workplace cultures.
- **Mental Health Integration:** Embed mental health considerations into organizational policies beyond those in HR such as safety protocols and strategic planning.
- **Jobsite Communications:** Construction companies interact with employees, trade partners, vendors and clients. Being clear on jobsites about mental health resources helps to set a tone for everyone there.
- **Comprehensive Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Provide 24/7 confidential counseling services, crisis intervention, and referral resources. Ensure these are well-publicized and easily accessible in the office and on a jobsite.
- **Normalize Help-Seeking:** Share stories of recovery and resilience to demonstrate that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- **Partnership Development:** Collaborate with community mental health organizations, healthcare providers, and industry associations to share resources and best practices. See the resources page for organizations.
- **Develop Location Specific Resources:** Develop materials for both the office and jobsites with appropriate language, visual images and content.



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Sample Leadership Speech

Opening: Good morning, everyone. I want to talk to you today about something that's not easy to discuss, but it's critical for all of us – suicide prevention in our industry and our company.

The Reality: The construction industry has one of the highest suicide rates of any profession. The numbers are sobering – construction workers are four times more likely to die by suicide than in workplace accidents. Every day we lose 14 people in the industry to suicide. That's not just a statistic. That represents our colleagues, our friends, and our family members.

Why This Matters: We work in an industry that prides itself on building things that last – bridges, buildings, infrastructure that serves communities for generations. But we can't build a strong future if we're not taking care of the people doing the building. Every single person on this team matters. Every life has value. Every story is important.

Insert personal story, connection, company alignment.

Our Commitment: As a company, we're committed to creating a culture where it's okay to not be okay. Where asking for help is seen as a strength, not weakness. We are sharing resources and presenting training because your mental health is just as important as your physical safety. We already say "safety first" every day – now that includes mental health safety.

What We're Doing: We are offering training program on suicide prevention to make sure everyone knows that we take this seriously and also to ensure everyone knows that seeking help will never put your job at risk. Your career is safe when you prioritize your wellbeing.

What We Need From You: Look out for each other. If you notice a coworker struggling – maybe they're more withdrawn, working excessive hours, or just don't seem like themselves – reach out and check in on them. It might feel uncomfortable, but it could save a life.

Resources Available: *Customize to your organization*

Closing: We build structures that stand the test of time by using the right materials, the right teams and following the right safety protocols. Let's apply that same care and attention to building a supportive workplace where everyone can thrive. Your life matters. Your wellbeing matters. And we're here to support you.

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, call 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Let's commit today to looking out for each other – because that's what we do in construction. We work as a team, and we make sure everyone goes home safe.

Remember: **Stepping up to save lives is something we can all do.**

Thank you.



Construction Statistics and Impact

5,100

Estimated construction worker deaths in 2023 from suicide

<https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/DataBulletin-April2025.pdf>

982

Fatal work injuries in construction, 423 from falls, slips or trips in 2023

https://www.cpwr.com/update_newsletter/april-new-data-bulletin-examines-injuries-overdoses-and-suicides/

16,000

Drug overdose deaths in the construction industry in 2023

https://www.cpwr.com/update_newsletter/april-new-data-bulletin-examines-injuries-overdoses-and-suicides/

501,000

2024 worker shortage in construction in addition to current hiring

<https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag23.htm>

Human Cost of Suicide

- Each suicide affects an estimated 135 people, including coworkers, family, and friends
- Lost lives represent irreplaceable colleagues, mentors, and community members

Workplace Impact

- Decreased productivity due to grief, trauma, and mental health challenges
- Disrupted team dynamics and project continuity
- Replacement cost of the worker
- Legal and insurance costs
- For every \$1 invested in mental health in the workplace, the return on investment is \$4-\$8

Industry Impact

- Reinforces perception of construction as high-risk industry
- Creates barriers to recruiting new talent
- Affects ability to build supportive workplace culture

The Impact of Suicide on the Construction Industry

The construction industry faces a perfect storm of factors contributing to elevated suicide rates among workers. Industry challenges like job insecurity, physical demands, and economic pressures intersect with a workplace culture that often discourages help-seeking and emotional vulnerability. When these systemic issues overlap with personal experiences of isolation, financial stress, or mental health struggles, workers can find themselves at critical risk. Understanding how these three domains interconnect is essential for developing comprehensive prevention strategies that address not just individual needs, but also transform workplace environments and tackle broader industry-wide issues. Only by addressing all three areas simultaneously can we create meaningful change and save lives in the construction community.

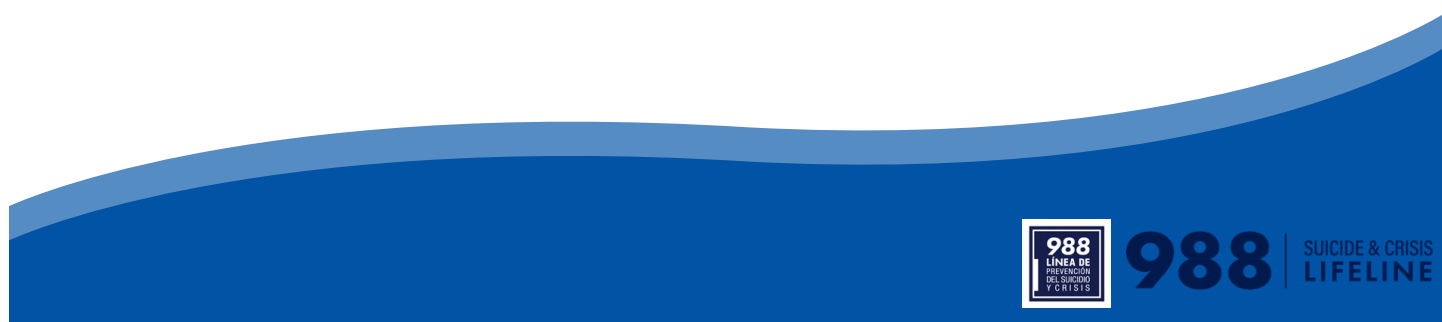


Organizational Next Steps to Support Suicide Prevention

- Set up partnerships with suicide prevention organizations for more in-depth training and support
- Create a sustainable mental health program across the organization
- Solicit active and visible support from senior leaders and managers for speaking about mental health and suicide awareness on a regular basis
- Make sure that Employee Assistance Program resources are understood and easily accessible by all employees
- Coordinate with trade partners to promote greater awareness of mental health and suicide prevention in the industry
- Provide training programs on mental health

Articles

Construction-Specific Resources	
Construction workers are dying by suicide at an alarming rate	https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/economics/construction-workers-are-dying-suicide-alarming-rate-rcna156587
Bechtel and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention Partner to Prevent Construction Worker Suicides	https://www.bechtel.com/press-releases/bechtel-and-the-american-foundation-for-suicide-prevention-partner-to-prevent-construction-worker-suicides/
Mental Health Trends in the Construction Industry: A Look at Anxiety, Depression, Psychological Distress, Suicides, and Overdoses	https://www.cpwr.com/wp-content/uploads/DataBulletin-September2024.pdf
CDC report finds 61% of violent deaths were by suicide, 30% by homicide in 2022	https://www.aha.org/news/headline/2025-06-11-cdc-report-finds-61-violent-deaths-were-suicide-30-homicide-2022
Culture Coach Resources - Blog Posts	
Construction Suicide Prevention Week 2025: Building Safety from the Ground Up Action Plan	CultureCoach.biz/post/construction-suicide-prevention-week-2025-building-safety-from-the-ground-up-action-plan
Supporting Construction Suicide Prevention Week by Building a Lasting Mental Health Program	CultureCoach.biz/post/beyond-september-building-lasting-mental-health-support-in-construction
Three Ways Psychological Safety Strengthens Construction Safety Programs	CultureCoach.biz/post/three-ways-psychological-safety-strengthens-construction-safety-programs
Five Steps to Start Building Psychological Safety in Your Construction Company	https://www.culturecoach.biz/post/five-steps-to-start-building-psychological-safety-in-your-construction-company
Psychological Safety in Construction: A Multifaceted Approach to Building Better Workplaces	CultureCoach.biz/post/psychological-safety-in-construction-a-multifaceted-approach-to-building-better-workplaces



Resources for Organizations

Construction-Specific Resources		
Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention	PreventConstructionSuicide.com	Individual educational resources, Personal stories and recovery resources. Toolbox talk templates, supervisor training modules, worker resource cards (fit in hard hats). Take the free organizational assessment.
Construction Working Minds	ConstructionWorkingMinds.org	Organizational resources and best practices, industry summit and networking
The Center for Construction Research and Training	CPWR.com	Toolbox talks, research and white papers
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention	HardHatCourage.com	Free resources to equip workers with the tools to improve self-care and peer support for mental health and empower the industry to prioritize mental health just as much as physical safety. English and Spanish.
Government and Regulatory Resources		
OSHA	OSHA.gov/ PreventingSuicidesWorkplace	Links to relevant industry resources Task force partnerships with industry leaders
Center for Disease Control	CDC.Gov	“Critical Steps Your Workplace Can Take Today to Prevent Suicide”
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)	CDC.gov/niosh/index.html	Suicide and occupation research, workplace mental health resources Science blog with construction-specific guidance
Mental Health First Aid for Construction	MentalHealthFirstAid.org	Training and Certification Programs for Organizations
QPR Institute	QPRInstitute.com	Question, Persuade, Refer: suicide prevention training programs, Train-the-trainer
Veteran Affairs	MentalHealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/	Wide range of services for veterans
Workplace Suicide Prevention	WorkplaceSuicidePrevention.com	Resources for organizations about preventing suicides in the workplace

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A Facilitator's Guide to Suicide Prevention in Construction



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Introduction

Suicide prevention is a topic that can be hard to talk about. But, it is a necessary one. We are losing 14 people a day in the construction industry to suicide. It is estimated that every suicide impacts 135 people. And, if you lose someone on your jobsite to suicide, it will have an impact on your people and your project.

The 5-minute video and this guide have been designed to make it as easy as possible for you to start the conversation about suicide prevention. You may feel uncomfortable and that is ok. It isn't important to be perfect when speaking about this topic. What is most important is to start the conversation and to raise awareness. We have provided sample scripts to make it easier along with tips for facilitating conversations and a resources list.

We have provided a page of resources you can post in this guide to make it easier for people on your jobsites to get help if they need it. The national 988 hotline is available in English and Spanish and is an important resource to help people get professional help 24-7. There are many organizations that can support you in providing education about this topic including The Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Reach out to get additional information and resources.

Using the *Stepping Up To Save Lives* Video

The video can be used in a variety of ways including:

- A stand-alone video shared with employees, contractors and vendors as a way to promote information about suicide prevention via a text message, email link or on platforms such as Hammertech or SiteForm.
- Presenting the video and information at a small group meeting at a jobsite or office as part of a stand down focusing on suicide prevention.
- Incorporating the video as part of larger mental health strategies across the organization about suicide prevention.

Preparing for Using the Video

- **Stand Alone:** If using the video as a stand alone, this guide provides a sample email/text script to use to introduce the video and to follow-up. If using a project management platform, these intro/outro scripts can be embedded into the platform.
- **Stand-Down:** If using the video as part of a stand-down, there is a script to use as an introduction and there is a discussion guide with sample discussion questions and guidelines to help you as a facilitator. Take time to review these materials as part of your preparation.
- **Larger Mental Health Awareness:** If you are incorporating the video into a larger awareness program, the companion guide for organizations includes best practices for how to integrate it effectively and ways to incorporate suicide prevention into your other work.



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Using the Video as a Stand Alone Tool via Email or in a Platform

Using An Introduction Before the Video

If you are going to be requesting people view the video on their own, either by a text link on their phone, or through having it on a platform like HammerTech or SiteForm, it will be most effective with context before and after the video is watched. The scripts below can be used to explain what the people will be watching before and then following up after the video.

Sample Introduction Script

While we've made significant progress addressing physical safety hazards on jobsites, we're now expanding our attention to support mental health and wellbeing too. We are doing this because we realize that every day we lose 14 people to suicide in the construction industry. As a company, we're participating in a Suicide Prevention Awareness campaign because we believe in taking care of our whole team. We know that mental health challenges can affect anyone. This is an important conversation, and we want everyone to feel comfortable discussing mental health just like we do physical safety. Every team member is an important part of our team and we want to create a stronger support system for each other..

Please watch this 5-minute video to learn about what warning signs to look for and ways you can support a coworker who might be struggling. Remember: small actions can make a big difference.

If you need help, please call or text the national hotline for help 988, which is available in English and Spanish 24-7 or reach out to:

Insert company contact/Employee Assistance Program

Follow Up Text After the Video

Paying attention to mental health isn't something that happens for just one day or one week once a year. It is something that we need to pay attention to all year long. We all have challenging days, weeks, even months. And, we can all look out for each other. Sometimes that is just a friendly smile or a quick nod. Sometimes what people need is something more. If you need help, please call or text the national 988 hotline for help 24-7 in English or Spanish. If you want to talk about this video or have questions, please reach out to:

Insert company contact



Using the Video in a Stand Down or Group Setting

10 Minute Stand Down

1 Minute: Opening Script
5 Minutes: Show the video
4 Minutes: Wrap up using closing script

20 Minute Stand Down

1 Minute: Opening Script
5 Minutes: Show the video
10 Minutes: Discussion
4 Minutes: Wrap up using closing script

Preparation Ahead of Time:

- Review the sample scripts
- Let everyone know the time and place
- Check that the technology works
- Print out poster example

On the Day

- Pull up the video link or video on a flat screen or provide the video link via email or text message to watch the video.
- Remind people to give their full attention for 15 -20 minutes for this important topic.
- Remind people that this is a serious topic and one that does not include joking around and to show respect when others are speaking is important.

Opening Script:

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Insert a personal story, connection or link to the work.

We are going to watch a five-minute video that explains what signs we need to watch for and ways that we can help.

Post Video Script

That was a powerful video and it provided us with some helpful tips. The most important one being the national hotline number 988 which is available in English and Spanish and it can be used for mental health support, suicide prevention and alcohol and drug challenges.

Resources that are available through our company are: Provide information about company resources and Employee Assistance Program

Discussion Questions

If time allows, here are some discussion questions you can use:

- Does anyone have any questions from the video?
- What were you thinking about during the video?
- What are some ways that we can help each other when we see that someone is struggling?
- What is happening on the jobsite that could contribute to mental health struggles? How might we change them?
- How do our long hours, physical demands and project deadlines affect our mental health?

Closing Script

Thank you all for your time and attention today. This is an important topic which is having a huge impact on our industry. You will see posters up around the jobsite reminding us of the national hotline number 988 and I urge everyone to remember this and to use this resource for yourself or to help others. They can help in English and Spanish.

Paying attention to mental health isn't something that happens for just one day or one discussion. It is something that we need to pay attention to all year long. We all have challenging days, weeks, even months. And, we can all look out for each other. Sometimes that is just a friendly smile. Sometimes what people need is something more.

Each one of you is important to us here on the job and to those that care about you in your life. Each one of us can help each other. If you have concerns for a colleague and you don't feel comfortable saying anything yourself, please come and talk to me or another foreman or reach out to:

Provide information about company resources and Employee Assistance Program

Facilitator Tips

When facilitating conversations on uncomfortable topics such as suicide prevention it helps to put others at ease and to create a sense of what's known as psychological safety within the group. Psychological safety is when people feel comfortable being themselves and expressing their thoughts openly. To help to create this, here are some tips to help you with the facilitation. Do the best you can, you don't need to be perfect. Just lead the presentation with empathy and compassion and it will come across to those in the group. If no-one speaks up that is ok, just raising awareness is an important first step.

Respect Others: Remind people to be respectful of other experiences and ideas. Everyone has their own lived experiences that may, or may not, be the same as other people's. Two people who have the same experience can still view it differently.

Don't Interrupt: Let people finish speaking, even if they pause. People may reveal things that are hard to share and it is important to give people the space they need. If someone interrupts, ask them to wait until the person finishes and encourage the person to finish what they were saying.

Pause: Don't be afraid to ask for a pause to reflect for a moment if needed. Sometimes the group needs a few moments of reflection if someone says something serious, emotional or powerful.

Watch Assumptions: Be careful that people don't jump to conclusions about what people mean, ask questions to clarify if it is unclear.

Encourage The Use of "I" Statements: Watch if people make broad general statements such as "All____ feel this way." For any community or group, there are many different perspectives to take into account. Encourage people to speak from their own personal perspective by saying "I feel..."

Use Open-Ended Questions: Instead of yes/no questions, use open-ended questions to gain insight and to deepen a discussion:

- "Can you tell me more about how you came to that conclusion?"
- "Can you share what that meant to you?"
- "Are you willing to share any more details so that we understand better?"
- "Are there any resources that you or others need?"

Don't Push: Let others share at their own comfort level. Don't push people to share if they don't want to.

Shift Your Language: Use "Yes, and..." instead of "Yes, but..." This allows conversations to build using a both/and mindset.

Use Active and Empathetic Listening Techniques: Showing people that they are being actively listened to promotes better understanding and engagement in conversations.

Active listening: You give the speaker your undivided attention. You pick up on key themes and messages and can repeat those back. The people speaking feel understood and valued.

Example: "Key points that I hear you making are: _____, did I miss anything?"

Empathetic listening: In addition to active listening, you are also paying attention to the emotions that are being conveyed. People feel that you understand what something means to them.

Example: "I can hear the frustration in your voice."

For hard conversations, it is important to practice active and empathetic listening so that you can fully understand different perspectives and can share without injuring someone's dignity.

In summary:

Ask respectfully.

Listen carefully.

Support openly.



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Facilitator Tips cont.

What do I do if someone has an emotional reaction?

It is important to remember (and to remind others) that this topic can bring up emotions such as lived experiences, fear, past memories of loved ones that have been lost or feelings of being overwhelmed. If someone's emotions bubble over or become high, it is good to check in and ask "would you like to take a moment to collect yourself?" If they nod/say yes, allow a moment of silence for them to gather their thoughts before checking to see if they want to continue speaking. If someone is really distraught, you can use "It is clear this is an intense/hard discussion/topic for you. Please take the time you need to collect yourself. I will check back at the end of the discussion to see if there is anything else you would like to add. Is that ok?" Asking their permission puts them in a sense of control which will help them to feel more grounded. People may have emotions come up just listening to the conversation. Let people know ahead of time that if they need to, they are welcome to step outside at any time.

What do I say/do if someone jokes around?

"I would like to remind you that this is no joking matter. We are losing people every day in construction to suicide and we have to make changes so that this can stop."

Making Change in the Industry

The construction industry is facing a serious challenge when it comes to suicide risk. Our jobsite cultures have often made it hard for people to ask for help or talk about what they're going through. When jobsite pressures combine with personal struggles-feeling isolated, dealing with money problems, or facing mental health challenges-workers can find themselves at real risk. That's why prevention can't just focus on the individual. We have to look at the bigger picture too: how we support people, how we shape the jobsite culture, and how the industry as a whole can change. It takes addressing all three together to make a real difference—and to save lives in our construction community.

Next Steps

Here are next steps you can do to help promote mental wellness and suicide prevention:

- Post the resources page, the 988 poster and information about your company's Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Reach out to your Employee Assistance Program to learn what resources they have and how they can support employees
- Shut down any comments or jokes that belittle mental health and people concerned over mental health.
- Share resources for people who have lost someone to suicide such as Suicide Grief Support from the Samaritans:
Losing someone to suicide is a painful and difficult experience. Samaritans offers free in-person and virtual programs to support suicide loss survivors in their grieving. Learn more at SamaritansHope.org/gss



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Resources for Help You are not alone.

Emergency Services Contacts

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline	Call or text 988 Available 24/7 Chat: 988lifeline.org English & Spanish	Trained counselors for immediate support for suicide, mental health, drug and alcohol and other issues
Crisis Text Line	Text HOME to 741741	Trained crisis counselors 24/7
SAMHSA National Helpline	1-800-662-4357 Available 24/7, 365 days a year	Free and confidential Substance Abuse and Mental Health Hotline: FindTreatment.gov
Veterans Crisis Line	1-800-273-8255, Press 1 Specifically for veterans	24/7 support Chat and text options available
Emergency Services	Call 911 for immediate physical danger	

Construction-Specific Individual Resources

Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention	PreventConstructionSuicide.com	Individual educational resources, personal stories and recovery resources
Construction Working Minds	ConstructionWorkingMinds.org	Individual support and resources, industry-specific mental health information

Mental Health Resources for Individuals and Families

American Federation for Suicide Prevention	AFSP.org HardHatCourage.com	Resources for individuals, families and organizations to prevent suicides and to cope after a suicide.
Samaritans	SamaritansHope.org	Hotline, suicide prevention, grief counseling (free and virtual for access from anywhere)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)	NAMI.org	Support groups for individuals and families, educational resources, local chapters, peer support programs
Mental Health America	MHANational.org	Mental health screening tools (anonymous and free), local resources



988 | SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

Need Help?

Call or text for yourself or a friend.



988

SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



Caring counselors to talk to 24-7

If you need to talk, the 988 Lifeline can help if you are facing mental health struggles, emotional distress, alcohol or drug use concerns.

You are not alone.

For additional resources for suicide prevention and mental health in the construction industry:
PreventConstructionSuicide.com • ConstructionSuicidePrevention.com • HardHatCourage.com