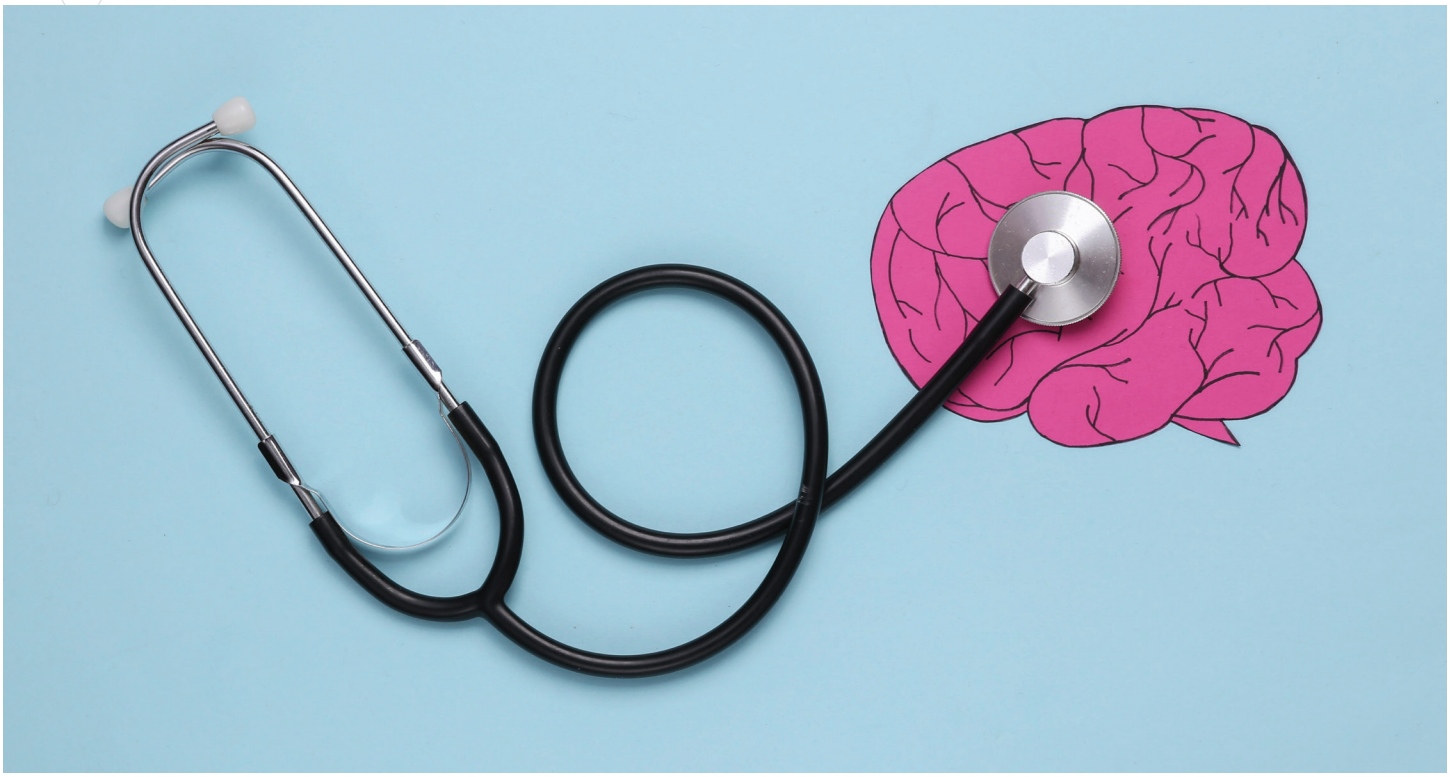
TOOLBOXTALK

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS



Construction is one of the most physically and mentally demanding industries in the country. Long hours, physically demanding work, injuries, financial pressures, changing job conditions, time away from family, and substance abuse affect thousands of workers every year. Left unrecognized, these challenges can impair concentration, judgment, communication, and decision making, increasing the risk of incidents both on and off the job.

Mental health is no longer simply a personal concern. It has become one of construction's most significant safety challenges. More than five times as many construction workers die by suicide each year than die from all occupational incidents combined. Those statistics do not include fatal drug overdoses, making the overall impact even greater. Research also indicates that suicide rates within the construction industry continue to increase.

Construction also experiences some of the highest rates of musculoskeletal injuries and chronic pain. Medical research has established a strong relationship between chronic pain and depression, with each capable of worsening the other. Years of physically demanding work, recurring injuries, and persistent pain can gradually affect mood, sleep, motivation, and overall mental well being, sometimes without the worker recognizing how much has changed.

Construction workers are trained to recognize unsafe conditions and unsafe acts before they result in an incident. Mental health deserves the same level of awareness. Many people experiencing depression or another mental health condition do not recognize the severity of what they are experiencing. Others know something is wrong but delay seeking help because of stigma, pride, fear of being judged, or concern about how it could affect their career. As a result, coworkers are often the first to recognize that something has changed.

Be alert for significant changes in a coworker's behavior. Withdrawal from others, noticeable mood changes, increased irritability, unusual risk taking, difficulty concentrating, increased alcohol or drug use, comments expressing hopelessness, or simply not acting like themselves may indicate someone is struggling. One sign alone does not necessarily indicate a crisis, but a pattern of change should never be ignored.

You are not expected to diagnose a mental health condition or solve someone's problems. You are expected to pay attention, start a conversation when something does not seem right, and encourage a coworker to seek help. If you believe someone may be in immediate danger of harming themselves or others, call or text 988 immediately to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and notify your supervisor in accordance with company procedures.

Recognizing hazards has always been part of construction. Some hazards involve equipment, electricity, or falls. Others involve the people working beside us. The responsibility is the same: recognize the hazard, take appropriate action, and do not ignore warning signs.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Approximately how many more construction workers die by suicide each year than from occupational incidents?
2. Why are construction workers at an increased risk for mental health challenges?
3. Name at least three behavioral changes that may indicate a coworker is struggling.
4. What should you do if you believe a coworker may be experiencing a mental health crisis?

OSHA Standard
No. ????
Mental Health Awareness

Talk Given By:	Date:
Company Name:	Location:
Printed Name	Signature

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace and workers have rights. OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's On-site Consultation Program offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your regional or area OSHA office, call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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