

LET'S TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

Best Practices in Construction

Kara (Houck) McCaffrey, MBA





If you need to step away,
no worries!

Agenda:

- Why mental health and suicide prevention matter in the construction industry
- Tips to support well-being and mental health of employees
- Resources available for construction companies



ABOUT ME!

- Chief Wellness Officer at Houck
- Background – Construction & Healthcare IT
- Mental Health First Aider
- Vital Cog Instructor



• Member of:

- Construction Suicide Prevention Week Committee (2025 Vice Chair)
- Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention Pathway Committee
- Workplace Suicide Prevention and Postvention Committee
- Dane County's Suicide Prevention & Harm Reduction Coalition
- Keystone Contractor Association's Mental Health Task Force



WHY should you care?



Top Four Construction Hazards

The top four causes of construction fatalities are: Falls, Struck-By, Caught-In/Between and Electrocutions.

Prevent Falls

- Wear and use personal fall arrest equipment.
- Install and maintain perimeter protection.
- Cover and secure floor openings and label floor opening covers.
- Use ladders and scaffolds safely.



Prevent Struck-By

- Never position yourself between moving and fixed objects.
- Wear high-visibility clothes near equipment/vehicles.



Prevent Caught-In/Between

- Never enter an unprotected trench or excavation 5 feet or deeper without an adequate protective system in place; some trenches under 5 feet deep may also need such a system.
- Make sure the trench or excavation is protected either by sloping, shoring, benching or trench shield systems.



Prevent Electrocutions

- Locate and identify utilities before starting work.
- Look for overhead power lines when operating any equipment.
- Maintain a safe distance away from power lines; learn the safe distance requirements.
- Do not operate portable electric tools unless they are grounded or double insulated.
- Use ground-fault circuit interrupters for protection.
- Be alert to electrical hazards when working with ladders, scaffolds or other platforms.



For more complete information:



OSHA 3216-EN-06



of Construction Deaths* (2022)

NIOSH & BLS

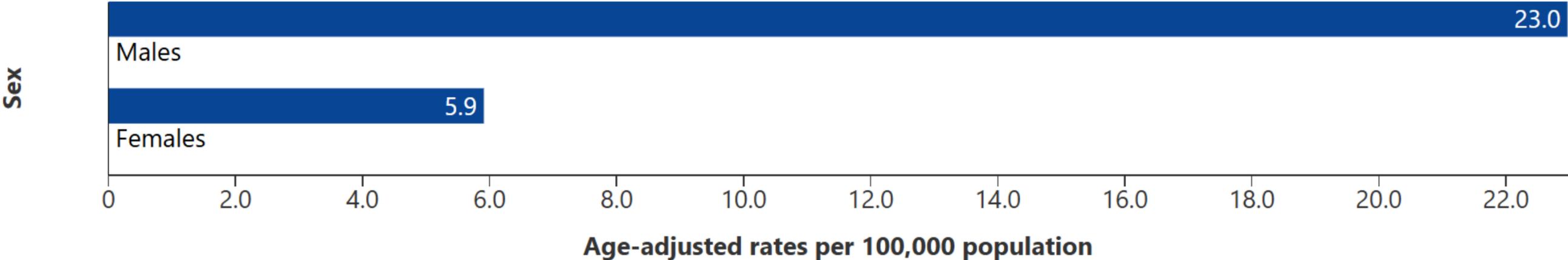
*Worker-age



WHY is this the case?

POPULATION

The suicide rate among males in 2022 was approximately four times higher than the rate among females. Males make up 50% of the population but nearly 80% of suicides.



~90% of construction workforce is **male**

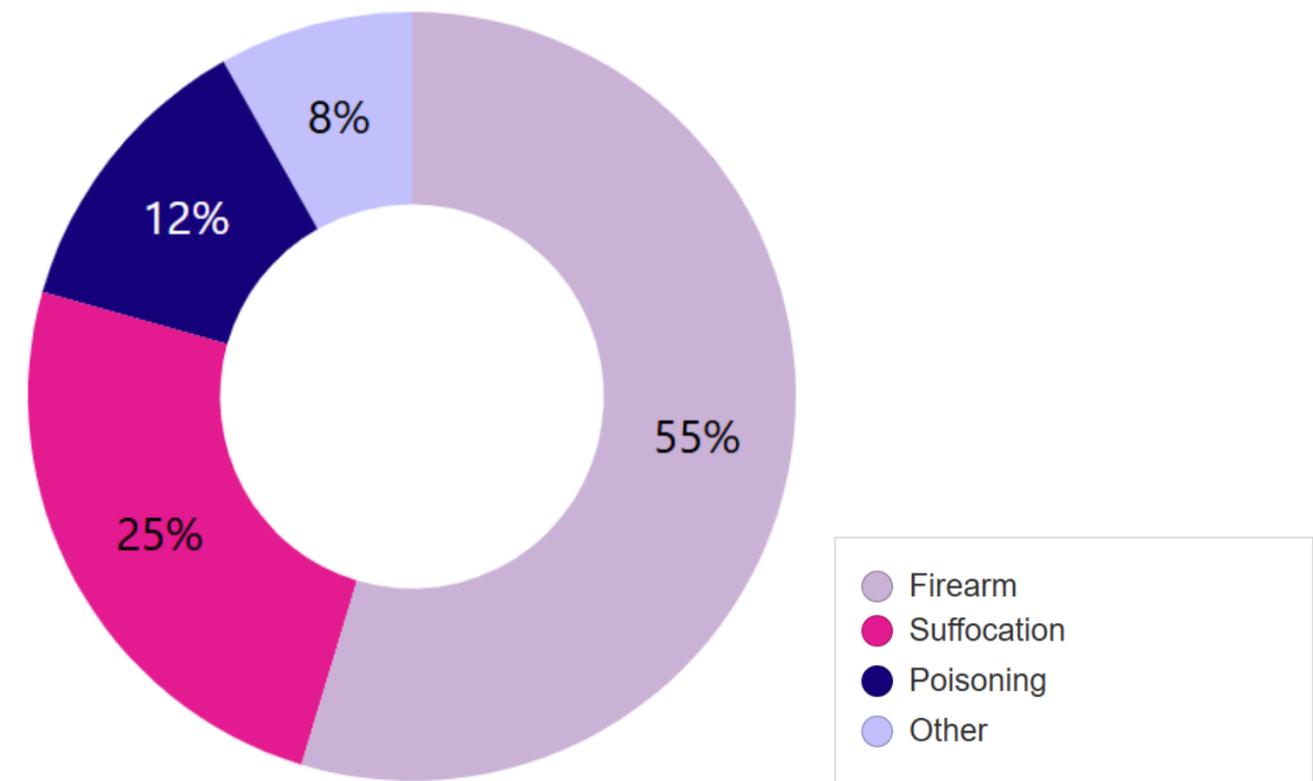
Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)



ACCESS TO LETHAL MEANS

Firearms are the most common method used in suicides. Firearms were used in more than 50% of suicides in 2022.

- **Gun owner culture**
- **Veterans**



NOTE: Firearms are the most *lethal* of methods

Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)



AND MORE...

Irregular work hours

Time away from family/friends

Long work hours

Frequency changes in co-workers/tasks

Weather dependence/job seasonality

Pain management

Physical demands/exhaustion

Substance use culture

Stressful schedule driven work

Access to healthcare

Risk-taking work environment

Tough guy mentality/stoic nature

Stigma





*Mental health issues
does not =
suicide!*

- Research shows that **46%** of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental illness

About **90%** of people who die by suicide had some form of **mental illness**

- How common are mental health issues?

1 in 5 adults in the US live with a mental illness

~80% of construction workers have experienced some form of moderate to severe **mental health issue**

*National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
The Ohio State University
The Construction Industry Rehabilitation Plan*



What is mental health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

It affects how we think, feel, and act, and helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.



It's on a spectrum!

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)



How can you make a difference?

Tips for Supervisors & Employers:

- **Promote** mental health year-round
- **Communicate** awareness and resources in different ways
- Incorporate mental health into **safety**
- Provide **education** to staff on mental health and suicide prevention

Education Options:



Resources

Organizations: Construction-Specific



**CONSTRUCTION SUICIDE
PREVENTION WEEK**



**CONSTRUCTION
WORKING MINDS**

Mental Health Promotion, Suicide Prevention
and Addiction Recovery at Work
www.ConstructionWorkingMinds.org



Construction Suicide Prevention Week

TOOLBOX TALKS FROM CONSTRUCTION SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK (ENGLISH)

- Construction and suicide
- Reducing stigma
- Recognize warning signs
- How to listen
- How to seek help
- Lethal means safety
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- Opioids and Substance Use
- Postvention Coping with Suicide Loss

TOOLBOX TALKS FROM CONSTRUCTION SUICIDE PREVENTION WEEK (SPANISH)

- Construcción y suicidio
- Reducir el estigma
- Reconocer señales de advertencia
- Cómo escuchar
- Cómo buscar ayuda
- Letal significa seguridad
- 988: Línea Directa de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis
- Opioides y Abuso de Sustancias
- Después de la intervención: Enfrentando la Pérdida por Suicidio

SPEAKER SOURCING GUIDE

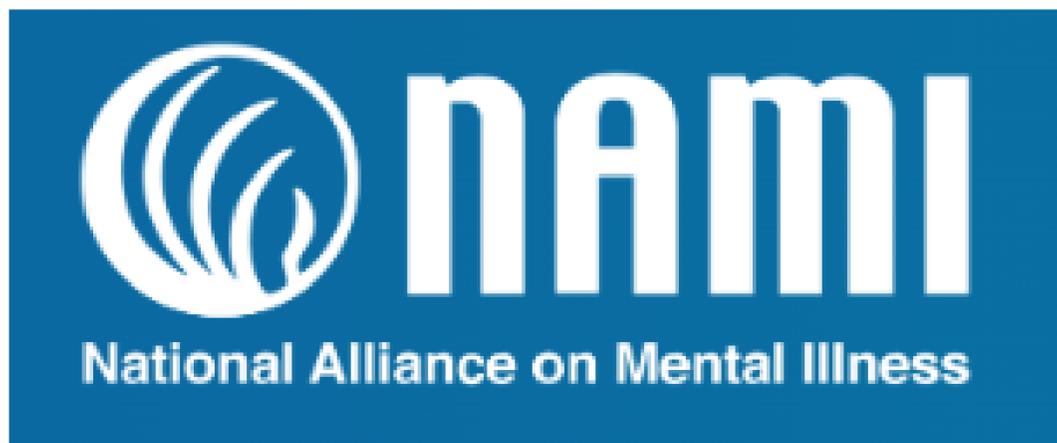
Guest speakers can be a powerful tool to help educate your employees or event attendees on suicide prevention and mental health awareness. If you wish to host a speaker at your Construction Suicide Prevention Week event or keep the conversation about suicide prevention and mental health awareness going year-round, the speakers below may be available to help.

Speaker Name	Speaking Topic	Location	Company	Cost	Contact
Brandon Anderson	Suicide Prevention, Mental Health, and Substance Misuse Awareness	Nationally and Virtual	AGC of Missouri	Free plus cost of travel	banderson@agcmo.org 636.887.5207
Justin Azbill	Preventative Measures for Mental Wellness	New England - South Shore Massachusetts and Virtual	Milwaukee Tool	Free	Justin.Azbill@MilwaukeeTool.com 857.636.2307
Joel Bennett	Resilience & Thriving: Transforming Cultures Through Presence and Connection: Leadership Mental Health	Nationally and Virtual	Organizational Wellness & Learning Systems	\$1,000 to \$20,000	learn@organizationalwellness.com 817.845.2772
Cal Beyer	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	Nationally and Virtual	SAFE Project (Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic)	Contact for pricing	cal@safeproject.us 651.307.7885
Phyllis Blackwelder	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	Missouri and Virtual	AFSP	Free	pblackwelder@afsp.org 314.703.1600
Sonya Bohmann	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	Nationally and Virtual	Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention	Free plus cost of travel	sbohmann@preventconstructionssuicide.com 610.908.2476
Bo Cooper	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	Nationally	Alberici	Free plus cost of travel	bcooper@alberici.com 314.606.9417
Brent Darnell	A Gut-Level Approach to Safety, Mental Health, and Performance	Atlanta, Georgia and Virtual	Brent Darnell International	\$0 to \$10,000 (keynote)	brent@brentdarnell.com 404.247.3747
Mark Dyke	Construction Mental Health and Suicide Prevention	Michigan and Virtual	Collaborative Counseling Group	Contact for pricing	mark@collabocounselinggroup.com 616.253.6268
Brad Evanoff	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	St. Louis, Missouri	Washington University	Free plus cost of travel	bevanoff@wustl.edu
Tanner Funk, RN	Suicide Prevention	Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas	Kansas University Hospital	Free	tfunk@kumc.edu 913.588.2835
John Gaal	Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness	Kansas and Missouri	Missouri AFL-CIO	Free plus cost of travel	jsgaal59@gmail.com 314.805.9966
Tony Gardner	QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Preventing Suicide Within Your Community	Missouri and Virtual	Missouri Veterans Suicide Prevention Team	Free	movspt@gmail.com 816.835.0881
Dr. Vince Hafell, DBA	Mental Health, Suicide Awareness and Transformational Leadership	Sarasota, Florida and Virtual	Ajax Paving Industries of Florida, LLC	Free plus cost of travel	vahfell@gmail.com 941.650.1417



www.constructionssuicideprevention.com

Organizations: National



Mental health is important and should be included when thinking about safety initiatives!

Prioritizing mental health can have many benefits:

- Reduces risk of physical injury/errors
- Lowers alcohol and substance use
- Improves job performance
- Saves money!
- Saves lives!

You can make a difference.

THANK YOU!

Feel free to contact me at kmccaffrey@houcks.com

