

PRIORITIZING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The construction industry is known as one of the most demanding industries for employees, both physically and mentally. Because of the dynamic and fast-paced work environment, assessing potential risks to protect workers is an integral part of each day on the job site. As a key component in company success and individual wellbeing, safety has become ingrained in industry culture. However, there are some safety concerns that are lesser addressed, and these revolve around mental health. This paper is going to discuss the issue of mental health for construction workers, its origins, and how the industry can approach it. Alongside this study, a prototype ToolBox Talk was created to demonstrate how organizations can educate their people and bring awareness to mental health within the construction industry.



WARNING SIGNS

- On Site
- Change in personality
 - Increased absenteeism
 - Engagement in risky or reckless behaviors
 - Unusual gifting of personal items to others
 - Decreased productivity
 - Directly mentioning feelings of depression, anxiety, isolation, etc.
- Off Site
- Dealing with challenges in their personal life
 - Family issues
 - Financial struggles
 - Substance abuse

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

- According to the CDC, the industry is characterized by several risk factors that are directly related to feelings of helplessness. These include:
- High pressure work environment
 - High rates of substance abuse
 - Job insecurity (end of term layoffs)
 - Physical displacement from family and friends
 - Financial stress

In addition, the industry also faces stigma surrounding mental health and a deeply-rooted "tough-guy" culture

THE SOLUTION

STEP 1: INCREASING KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS

By presenting workers with relevant information on a daily level, the industry can further shed light on the issue. This involves educating employees on the causes of mental illness, the warning signs, and the available resources. One effective way of presenting such information is through the use of a ToolBox talk.

STEP 2: RE-ASSESSING INDUSTRY CULTURE

If mental health were to be equated to physical health, organizations could create cultures that prioritize the mental well-being of their workers. This can be done by breaking down stigma, normalizing vulnerability, and enforcing mental health programs from the top-down in a company.