



KENTUCKY
AGC Self Insurers' Fund

Mental Health Safety in Construction

As a construction worker, you may often work in difficult environments with changing conditions and firm deadlines. These challenging settings can be stressful and negatively affect your mental health, so it is essential to take proactive steps to protect your mental well-being.

This article examines the factors that impact employees' mental health in the construction industry and what makes construction workers vulnerable to mental health issues. It also explores warning signs that mental health issues may be present and provides tips on how to improve mental health in the construction industry.

Mental Health in the Construction Industry

Poor mental health is a major issue for construction workers. According to a 2021 National Health Interview Survey from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 30.7% of the responding construction workers felt anxious at least once per month, and 9.3% felt depressed at least once per month. The construction industry also has one of the highest suicide rates among workers of any industry; over 5,000 construction workers die by suicide annually, according to the CDC.

Furthermore, the American Addiction Centers noted that approximately 15% of all construction workers in the United States have a substance abuse disorder, and the CDC has stated that construction and extraction occupation groups experience some of the highest death rates from drug overdoses.

What Makes Construction Workers Vulnerable to Mental Health Issues?

Several factors lead to a high number of mental health issues in the construction industry, including:

- Jobsite safety risks that cause injuries
- Long work hours and strenuous labor
- Challenging working conditions (e.g., extreme heat and cold)
- An environment where asking for help is not always encouraged
- Chronic pain
- Financial uncertainty due to seasonal work and a fluctuating economy
- Deadlines
- Poor work-life balance

Warning Signs

You should be aware of several warning signs that could be signs of mental health issues:

- Self-criticism, self-hatred, self-destructive behavior and talk about self-harm
- Isolation from others
- Decreased productivity and motivation
- Regular tardiness or routinely being absent from work
- Severe mood swings
- Negative talk, talking about the desire to die and having no hope for the future
- A loss of interest in activities and hobbies
- Irritability, anxiety or recklessness
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Headaches or gastrointestinal issues

Prevention Tips

You can take several actions to help prevent and address mental health concerns, including the following:

- Identify issues that make you anxious or worried and speak to your supervisor about them.
- Ask if there are any support services offered by the company and utilize those services.
- Show concern for co-workers if they are struggling and respond quickly if you believe they are in crisis.
- Call the suicide prevention hotline for help if you or a co-worker are having suicidal thoughts.
- Seek help for addictions, including those to alcohol, opioids or other drugs.
- Find a work-life balance and take time to pursue your hobbies and interests.
- Spend time in nature and with your family and pets.
- Eat healthier and get quality sleep.
- Take time to meditate, get massages and stretch.
- Speak with those who can help, such as family members, trusted friends, doctors, counselors and spiritual leaders.

Conclusion

Prioritizing mental health is essential for your overall well-being. By recognizing the warning signs and taking steps to improve your mental health, you can have a safer, less stressful and more fulfilling work experience.

Reach out to your supervisor for more information.

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