

## TOOLBOX TALK

# Mental Health & Fatigue

### WHY THIS MATTERS

The suicide rate for construction workers is 4 times the general population (OSHA). Fatigue increases injury rates by 18-30% on extended shifts (OSHA). 83% of construction workers have experienced a mental health issue. Your mind is as important as your hard hat.

**4x**

Higher suicide rate in construction vs general pop.

**30%**

More injuries on night shifts vs day shifts (OSHA)

**100%**

Mental health and fatigue are manageable

## 5 Actions to Protect Your Mental Health

Looking after your mind is not weakness — it takes real strength:

**1**

### TALK ABOUT IT — BREAK THE SILENCE

If you're struggling, tell someone. A coworker, supervisor, friend, or call 988. Asking for help is strength.

**2**

### WATCH FOR SIGNS IN YOUR CREW

Withdrawal, mood changes, irritability, reckless behavior, fatigue, or substance use. Ask: "Are you OK?"

**3**

### MANAGE FATIGUE — SLEEP IS NOT OPTIONAL

Get 7-9 hours of sleep. Fatigue impairs judgment as much as alcohol. Report if you're too tired to work safely.

**4**

### TAKE BREAKS AND RECOVER

Use rest breaks for actual rest. Step away from the task. Short breaks throughout the day prevent burnout.

**5**

### KNOW YOUR RESOURCES

EAP programs, 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, peer support. Know what's available before you need it.

## Daily Wellbeing Check

- Did you get at least 7 hours of sleep last night?
- Are you able to focus and make safe decisions today?
- Is anyone on your crew showing signs of unusual stress or withdrawal?
- Do you know how to access your company's EAP or mental health resources?
- Have you taken a real break today — not just a quick stop?

## Recognize the Warning Signs

### Fatigue signs

Difficulty concentrating, slow reactions, poor decisions, yawning, microsleeps, irritability.

### Depression signs

Persistent sadness, loss of interest, changes in appetite/sleep, hopelessness, withdrawal from others.

### Anxiety signs

Constant worry, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, physical tension, avoidance of situations.

### Substance misuse

Increased alcohol/drug use to cope, arriving impaired, hiding use, personality changes.

### Burnout signs

Exhaustion despite rest, cynicism, reduced performance, feeling disconnected from work.

### Crisis signs

Talking about being a burden, giving away possessions, saying goodbye, reckless behavior. ACT NOW.

## Common Mistakes That Make Things Worse

- ✗ "Toughing it out" instead of getting help — suppressing problems makes them worse, not better
- ✗ Using alcohol or drugs to cope — substances mask pain temporarily but multiply problems
- ✗ Working when dangerously fatigued — a tired worker is an unsafe worker for everyone on site
- ✗ Ignoring warning signs in coworkers — "it's not my business" costs lives. Check on your crew
- ✗ Thinking mental health is separate from safety — your mental state directly affects your physical safety

## What You Can Do Today

- ✓ Ask "Are you OK?" — those three words can save a life. You don't need to be a therapist
- ✓ 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988, 24/7, free and confidential
- ✓ Sleep is PPE for your brain — 7-9 hours. Less than 6 hours doubles your injury risk
- ✓ It's OK to not be OK — strength is recognizing when you need help and reaching out
- ✓ Build connections — eat lunch with your crew, talk about more than just work

## Discussion Questions for Your Team

1. How are extended work hours and overtime affecting our crew's energy and focus?
2. Does everyone know about the EAP and mental health resources available?
3. Would you feel comfortable telling your supervisor if you were struggling?
4. What can we do as a team to look out for each other's wellbeing?
5. If you noticed a coworker isolating themselves, what would you do?

### TOOLBOX TALK SIGN-OFF

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_