Stop. Make a Change.

Toolbox Talk: Suicide Awareness

Time: 15 Minutes

Audience: All site operatives & staff

Purpose: Raise awareness of suicide risks, reduce stigma, and promote pathways

1. Introduction

Good morning everyone, and thanks for taking the time to stop for this important talk.

Today we're not talking about equipment, machinery, or procedures - we're talking about something that affects lives more deeply: mental health and suicide awareness.

Construction has one of the highest suicide rates of any industry. That means our colleagues - our mates - people we see every day - could be struggling silently.

We need to talk about it.

2. The Facts

In the UK, two construction workers take their own lives every working day.

Male construction workers are nearly four times more likely to die by suicide than the average male in the UK.

The vast majority of these deaths are preventable.

Why does this happen in our industry?

3. Why Construction?

Construction work can be physically and mentally tough:

- Long hours and tight deadlines
- Job insecurity and working away from home
- High-pressure environments
- 'Man up' culture - where people don't feel comfortable speaking up
- Work culture
- Financial/home pressure
- Many workers feel they have to keep things bottled up, and over time, that can become overwhelming.

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4. Spotting the Signs

We're not trained psychologists - but we can look out for each other.

Here are some common signs someone might be struggling:

- Withdrawing or going quiet
- Mood changes, anger, or irritability
- Talking about feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Saying things like "what's the point?" or "you'd be better off without me"

If something doesn't feel right - trust your gut.

5. What You Can Do

If you're worried about someone:

- Ask them how they're doing. Don't be afraid to check in.
- Listen. You don't need to fix anything - just be there.
- Encourage them to talk to someone, whether it's a GP, a support line, or a mental health first aider.
- Don't ignore warning signs - your words could make a life-saving difference.

And if you're struggling yourself - please know this:

You are not alone.

You don't need to "tough it out."

Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

6. Support Available

Here are some places you can go for support:

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- Construction Industry Helpline: 0345 605 1956 (24/7, free)
- Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7, free)
- Your site's Mental Health First Aider
- GP or Occupational Health Services.

Keep the helpline number in your phone. It could help you - or help someone else.

7. Final Message

We look out for each other when it comes to lifting, ladders, and safety gear - let's do the same for mental health.

You never know the difference a simple conversation can make.

Let's keep the site safe, and let's keep each other safe too.

Supporting Video

Click the following link to watch a Mates In Mind video 'Chris's Story.' TRIGGER WARNING: Please note, the video includes mention of suicide and may be upsetting to some viewers: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDg14zNIF-w.

Optional Discussion (or conversation starters)

- Ask: "Has anyone seen any good practices around mental health support on site?"
- Ask: "What could you say to someone you think is struggling?"
- Encourage volunteers to share support ideas or experiences.
- Remind everyone it's okay to speak privately if they'd rather talk one-to-one later.

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