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Suicide prevention is a national priority for construction - by John Cruz

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Every September, we in the construction industry take time to focus on a difficult but very important issue. September is Suicide Prevention Month.

In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the construction industry had one of the highest rates of death by suicide among its workers – 5,242 in 2018, which was five times higher than U.S. construction worker fatalities on jobsites.

This is a national tragedy, but we are not powerless to fight it. Construction workers work with tools every day, and if we equip these 7.7 million individuals with the tools they need to prioritize mental health and protect their emotional wellbeing, they will use them.

Our first challenge is to shatter the stigma surrounding mental health issues with the goal of creating a zero-suicide industry. We employers can build a resilient workforce by providing access to resources to improve total human health: physical, mental, emotional, social, intellectual, financial, occupational and spiritual wellness.

Through its partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, ABC provides construction workers and employers with resources, including free suicide prevention training, the Suicide Prevention Lifeline call center, the Crisis Text Line, toolbox talks and speakers who can provide in-person, recorded and online education on suicide awareness, prevention and postvention.

Under a new federal program, those seeking help can simply call 988 to connect to mental health caregivers.

These are busy and challenging times for our industry and in our lives, and many of us often feel overwhelmed. For some, this is more than they can handle. So it's more than worth our time to do a few simple things to strengthen total human health among our workers and decrease the number of deaths by suicide. To learn how to access solutions to this human tragedy, visit preventconstructionsuicide.com. Doing this is a meaningful step we can all take during Suicide Prevention Month.

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