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Suffolk partners with Home Base to encourage OSHA to include suicide prevention in mandatory trainings

May 19, 2023 - Construction Design & Engineering

Boston, MA To mark Construction Safety Week and the start of Mental Health Awareness Month, Suffolk, one of the largest and most innovative real estate and construction enterprises in the country, is partnering with Home Base, the first and largest U.S. private sector clinic dedicated to providing lifesaving clinical care and mental health support for veterans, to spotlight the need for increased mental health resources and suicide awareness in the construction industry. In a letter sent to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the organizations call for additional suicide awareness and prevention initiatives, and inclusion of suicide awareness and prevention training as a core requirement in the OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 training curricula.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the construction industry has the second highest suicide rate of any United States industry group. The rate of suicide is about four times higher than the general population and is the second-highest rate of all workplace industries at 45 per 100,000. Multiple suicide risk factors contribute to this industry-wide crisis, including high psychological stress levels, emotional exhaustion, a culture of self-reliance and toughness, physically demanding work leading to chronic pain, and elevated usage of non-prescription opioids and alcohol. Veterans, a vital segment of the construction workforce, are a particularly vulnerable group, as data from the Veterans Affairs (VA) shows that former service members have a greater than fifty percent higher rate of suicide than the general population.

“The alarming data around the prevalence of mental health disorders and suicide in the construction industry requires immediate action to better support workers,” said John Fish, chairman and CEO of Suffolk. “It is the responsibility of every person, from our trade partners to superintendents to the highest levels of leadership, to help each other and encourage transparency, education and action. This is a national crisis, and we have a duty to everyone that works in our industry and their families to keep workers safe and provide the resources they need on the job and at home.”

“The current demand for mental health and brain injury care at Home Base for Veterans has never been higher than it is today and with much of the construction workforce being comprised of veterans, it is imperative that we ensure they have the critical resources they need now,” said Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Jack Hammond, executive director of Home Base.

“We are proud to partner with Suffolk to ensure that we can continue to provide world class care for Veterans, Service Members and their Families all at no cost to them.”

In their letter to Douglas Parker, OSHA Assistant Secretary of Labor, Fish and Hammond write, in part: “Together within our construction industry, and with the help of experts like OSHA, we must prioritize fostering a widespread culture of support and transparency regarding mental health. We believe that with increased training, awareness and resources, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for every worker operating in our industry.”

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540