



Safety News

Dedicated to ensuring the safest and healthiest working environment for our members

Summer 2024 | Issue 30

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Message from Jennifer Massey Health, Safety, and Environmental Administrator



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we plunge into the vibrant days of summer, it's crucial to keep safety at the forefront of our minds. With each new season, we encounter different

hazards and opportunities to improve our safety practices. Here are some key safety reminders and tips to ensure we all enjoy a safe and productive summer season.

Heat Stress and Hydration

Summer's higher temperatures can lead to heat stress and dehydration. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Take regular breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas, and wear lightweight, breathable clothing to help regulate your body temperature. As temperatures rise, so do concerns about heat-related illnesses in the workplace. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is taking significant steps to address these concerns by proposing new regulations to safeguard workers from heat stress and heat-related illnesses. (See more information in a later article)

Sun Protection

Protect yourself from harmful UV rays by wearing sunscreen with a high SPF, sunglasses, and wide-brimmed hats. Try to schedule outdoor tasks during the cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or late afternoon.

Equipment and Tool Safety

With more outdoor projects in the summer, it's essential to inspect all tools and equipment regularly. Ensure they are in good working condition and that safety guards are in place. Remember to use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for each task.

Awareness of Surroundings

Summer activities often mean working in different environments. Stay aware of your surroundings, especially pinch points. Watch for hazards such as uneven ground, loose debris, or wildlife.

Water Safety

If your summer tasks involve working near water, always use appropriate personal flotation devices and follow water safety protocols. Be mindful of slippery surfaces and strong currents, and never work alone near bodies of water.

Vehicle and Traffic Safety

Increased summer travel means more vehicles on the road. Stay vigilant when operating company vehicles or equipment. Follow all traffic laws, wear your seatbelt, and avoid distractions while driving.

Mental Well-being

The summer season can also bring added stress and fatigue. Make time for regular breaks, and ensure you're getting enough rest at night. Maintain a healthy work-life balance to keep your mind and body in top condition.

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Our Vision

The United Association and its local unions will apply its best practices and resources to build the most educated and safest workforce in all sectors of the piping industry.

Emergency Preparedness

Review your site’s emergency procedures regularly and ensure that all team members are familiar with them. Whether it’s dealing with heat-related illnesses, severe weather, or any other emergency, being prepared is key to a swift and effective response.

Let’s make this summer our safest yet by staying proactive and vigilant regarding safety. Your well-being is our top priority, and together we can create a safe and enjoyable working environment for everyone.

Stay safe and enjoy the summer! ■

A Message from General President Mark McManus



While May was Mental Health Awareness Month, the UA continues to work hard to lead the way in addressing the stigma surrounding mental health. That’s why I’m proud to share the great work that our newly formed UA Pipe

PALS (Peer Allies for Life Success) Advisory Committee is doing.

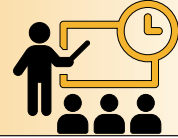
Led by Mike Hazard and Jen Massey, UA Pipe PALS is comprised of UA members of all levels. The group is creating resources and training courses to ensure all UA members have the tools they need to change the culture surrounding mental health issues, promoting a positive mental health outlook for all.

To learn more, I encourage you to watch this [UA Pipe PALS and Mental Health Awareness video](#). It was shared on UA social media in May, as well.

Sadly, the construction industry and our trades face some of the highest suicide rates in the world. And, for too long, the stigma attached to mental health has prevented brothers and sisters from getting help that could be life-changing. It is up to all of us to work together, to change this stigma, and to be there for someone in need.

I encourage all of you to get involved with UA Pipe PALS, to take the VitalCog courses, and to talk with your members about the resources we have available. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to anyone at the General Office if you are in need—and remember, dialing 988 can save a life.

TRAINING



2024 OSHA Outreach Training

OSHA 510 Course 2150

OSHA Standards for the Construction Industry

October 7-10, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

December 2-5, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

OSHA 500 Course 2151

Trainer Course for the Construction Industry

October 21-25, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

December 9-13, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

OSHA 502 Course 2152

Update for Construction Industry Outreach Trainers

September 9-12, 2024 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Online (Zoom)

December 16-19, 2024 10:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Online (Zoom)

Course 2154

Safe Bolting Principles and Practices

October 21-22, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

December 9-10, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

Course 2170

Opioids in the Workplace

October 22-24, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Ann Arbor, MI

December 10-12, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Online (Zoom)

Course 2171

Introduction to Peer Support Skills and Mental Health Literacy

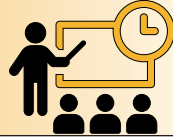
October 8-10, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
El Monte, CA

Course 2172

Advanced Skills in Suicide Prevention Training, Peer Support Skills, and Mental Health Literacy

October 22-24, 2024 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
El Monte, CA

TRAINING



2024 VitalCog Training

Course 2171
Introduction to Peer Support Skills and Mental Health Literacy

July 23-25, 2024 Portland, OR, Local 290
 August 9-16, 2024 Ann Arbor, MI, ITP, WCC
 October 8-10, 2024 Los Angeles, CA, Local 250

Course 2172
Advanced Skills in Suicide Prevention Training, Peer Support Skills, and Mental Health Literacy

August 9-16, 2024 Ann Arbor, MI, ITP, WCC
 September 11-13, 2024 Portland, OR, Local 290
 October 22-24, 2024 Los Angeles, CA, Local 250

HEALTH AT WORK



Meet our Pipe PALS Advisory Committee Members

In the last issue, we introduced you to the Pipe PALS (Peer Allies for Life Success) program and the Advisory Committee tasked with championing it. This team is fully on board to elevate awareness and prioritize mental health in the workplace. We asked them to reflect on some deep questions about their own views and experiences regarding mental health and commitment to the Pipe PALS program.



Mike Hazard
 UA Training Specialist



Jennifer Massey
 UA Health, Safety, and Environmental Administrator



Nicole Jeup
 UA Veterans in Piping Program Administrator

Build Your Career at Tradeswomen Build Nations

Join thousands of your union sisters and building trades colleagues at the **14th annual Tradeswomen Build Nations** conference:

September 27-29, 2024
New Orleans, LA

Registration is now open for the largest gathering of tradeswomen in the world, where you'll learn and grow through workshops, inspiring speakers, networking, and more. Learn more about the conference schedule and registration details [here](#).



Omar Galindo
 Local 78 Organizer
 Pipe PALS Advisory Committee Chair

Why is the Pipe PALS Advisory Committee important to you?

I can have input based on my experiences with my mental health journey, which includes anxiety, depression, PTSD, and being a suicide attempt survivor. I believe leaders and members must understand that it is okay to go through a tough time with mental health issues and not be looked at as a failure or a burden to those around us. I want everyone to feel comfortable contacting someone who can support and assist in a crisis.

What motivates you personally to promote mental health in our Industry?

The last five years have been challenging, and I'm learning to navigate my mental health struggles effectively. I had been ignoring it and minimizing my issues since I left the Marine Corps in 2004. I recall an apprentice telling me for a few years that I needed help with my PTSD, and my response was, "I'm doing fine; others need it more than I do," until I realized I needed it for myself.

How can we address the most common mental health issues people face today?

It's an extensive scope, but in my opinion, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance use/abuse are most common. Talking about your struggles is part of the healing process, and listening helps someone feel "safe" and not like they're being judged negatively. I prefer group therapy, but it may not work for everyone. What I like about it is that as others share, I can relate, and it helps me discover areas that I am also struggling with and hadn't realized were a problem.

What changes have you seen in the approach to mental health over the past few years?

Unfortunately, I started to address my struggles at a dark time in my life, but in doing so, I learned a lot about myself and many mental health issues. I've taken numerous classes, have a lot more awareness, and have seen a lot of progress in our industry and society as a whole.

How can people get involved or volunteer to support mental health efforts?

The best way to start is by taking a mental health awareness class, something like VitalCog training, because the more awareness there is, the better prepared we can become as a society.

What is the importance of mental health awareness and education?

They are both critical to making positive strides in our industry and society. Talking openly about mental health will help reduce misconceptions and stigma, which hopefully can encourage those who are suffering to seek help and find a support network. This isn't limited to a select few; it's important to understand mental health's impact on daily life.

How should someone seek help if they suspect they have a mental health issue?

In life-threatening situations, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If you are suicidal or in emotional distress, consider using the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline to connect with a trained crisis counselor. Ask for help, seek out a therapist or a support group, and be patient with your progress—these situations are not one-size-fits-all. I went through several therapists, psychiatrists, and groups before I found the ones that worked best for me.

How can we overcome the challenges you see in addressing mental health within our community?

One challenge is the lack of general awareness and conversation. For so long, mental health struggles have been taboo and not something we talked about openly. Becoming more involved, taking awareness classes, and not being afraid to say, "I'm not okay" are all ways to overcome this. What I've

learned about myself is that sharing my experiences gives others the power and comfort to reach out for help. Telling my story is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of strength and growth, and I hope that others will be empowered to make a difference in their own way.

Why is the Pipe PALS Advisory Committee important to you?

Rarely in life does a person get an opportunity to help make a lasting difference in many people's lives. Serving on this committee allows me to help build something that is meaningful and so very important to the well-being of our members. I am honored to serve alongside some very passionate individuals in the pursuit of programs that have a direct impact on the lives of our members and their families.



Ben Bradshaw
Local 100 BM
Pipe PALS Advisory
Committee Co-Chair

What motivates you personally to promote mental health in our industry?

I know what it's like to struggle. I know the darkness of depression. I know the helplessness of addiction. I know the chaos of anxiety. Many of my brothers and sisters know what it's like to struggle as well. For too long, there has been a stigma around mental health and addiction issues. We have been encouraged to just suck it up and keep marching forward. I am motivated to help tear those walls down so others will have the comfort level to seek help and resources available when they are struggling.

How can we address the most common mental health issues people face today?

There are many ways people struggle. Some of the most common in our industry seem to be anxiety, depression, addiction, alcoholism, and thoughts of suicide. The best way to address them is head-on by talking and seeking help.

What changes have you seen in the approach to mental health over the past few years?

Thankfully, there's more of a spotlight shining on mental health in recent years. Attitudes towards mental health struggles are changing as well. Instead of thinking that a therapist's office is the realm of the insane or the weak, more people now view it as simply somewhere to turn anytime mental health struggles arise—similar to a trip to the doctor's office for a physical ailment.

How can people get involved or volunteer to support mental health efforts?

Start the conversation in your area about the need for mental health awareness and resources. Join the conversation if it

has already started. Encourage your leadership to develop peer ally programs and to secure resources for people in need of help to turn to. Volunteer to help with these programs and serve as a peer ally. Publicly share any struggles that you have had and encourage others to do the same. These efforts will tear down walls and encourage others to join the fight.

What is the importance of mental health awareness and education?

Awareness is critical so someone can know what is going on with them and that they are not alone. It helps us all to realize that many around us may be suffering in silence. Education goes hand-in-hand with awareness, informing us about what signs to look for in others and ourselves and where to find help.

How should someone seek help if they suspect they have a mental health issue?

If they do not have anyone to turn to, they should start by reaching out to their health and welfare provider for a list of therapists and/or addiction resources. If they find themselves in a mental health crisis, calling 988 is a good immediate step. Peer allies or an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if available, are valuable resources. Most importantly, they should get in contact with a professional to learn some tools to help deal with mental health struggles.

How can we overcome the challenges you see in addressing mental health within our community?

Vocalizing the issues we face every day is a huge step towards overcoming the stigma that surrounds discussing mental health and addiction. It can seem like an obstacle to help decision-makers see how important workplace mental health programs are. Continuing to show leaders that the need is real and what steps work to address it will help them come around. Communication and awareness go a long way to change hearts and minds and bring more people into the arena to help fight this very important battle.



Matt Taylor
Local 392 TD
Pipe PALS Advisory
Committee Coordinator

and loved ones too.

Why is the Pipe PALS Advisory Committee important to you?

I am honored to be a part of the UA Pipe PALS Advisory Committee because we have the opportunity to help our brothers and sisters and lay the groundwork for the entire construction industry. By spreading the word about mental health awareness, we have the potential to help countless people within the construction industry, plus their friends

What motivates you personally to promote mental health in our industry?

As someone who has battled depression, I know the toll it can take. It has a negative effect on every aspect of your day-to-day life. After assuming the role of Training Coordinator for Local 392, I quickly realized that many of our members are struggling with a mental health issue. I want to do whatever is possible to help the people around me with their struggles and see them succeed in their own lives.

How can we address the most common mental health issues people face today?

Depression and anxiety are the two most common mental health issues people are facing today. Both mental health issues can be addressed by talking, listening, and making that uncomfortable conversation more comfortable.

What changes have you seen in the approach to mental health over the past few years?

The COVID pandemic highlighted how the approach to mental health has changed dramatically. People realize that mental health is a serious issue. More people are talking about it and seeking help, and the list of mental health providers seems to be growing.

How can people get involved or volunteer to support mental health efforts?

Talk, listen, and if you notice something is off with someone, say something. Initiate that uncomfortable conversation. Help start or get involved with peer support groups. People are more likely to open up to someone in their same field and who has shared experiences.

What is the importance of mental health awareness and education?

These are a vital part of changing the stigma surrounding mental health. Classes such as VitalCog, 2171, and 2172 provide the tools needed to assist someone who may be struggling with a mental health issue.

How should someone seek help if they suspect they have a mental health issue?

Talk to someone you trust: a co-worker, a friend, a foreman, a training coordinator—anyone you connect with. Once that conversation starts, you will be amazed at how many people who may have shared experiences are willing to help.

How can we overcome the challenges you see in addressing mental health within our community?

There will always be challenges in addressing mental health. Most individuals are reluctant to talk about their problems or admit that something may be wrong. By educating people, providing training, and talking about mental health, we can normalize the conversation. The more we can do that, the easier it will be for people to come forward and seek help.

Why is the Pipe PALS Advisory Committee important to you?

Being a part of this committee is important because it provides a crucial platform to help those struggling with mental health and suicide. By raising awareness and offering support, we can create a more compassionate community for our UA members and potentially save lives.

What motivates you personally to promote mental health in our Industry?

What motivates me is the fact that I can contribute to a great cause that deeply impacts the lives of our brothers and sisters. In my current position, I most enjoy helping out and just being a set of ears for our apprentices.

How can we address the most common mental health issues people face today?

Some of the most common mental health issues people face today are anxiety, depression, PTSD, and substance use disorder. By encouraging open dialogue, we reduce the stigma. We need to promote access to resources, support early intervention, and advocate for comprehensive care.

What changes have you seen in the approach to mental health over the past few years?

Over the past few years, I've seen increased awareness and advocacy, which both help remove the stigma around mental health. Also, integrating technology through apps improves access to resources for everyone. A greater focus on early intervention means more people are getting help before their condition worsens. And lastly, more employers are recognizing the importance of implementing support programs and providing workplace mental health education.

How can people get involved or volunteer to support mental health efforts?

Volunteer with local mental health organizations or support groups, engage in campaigns that promote mental health, and advocate for mental health policies and support efforts. Attend training sessions such as VitalCog and the UA 2171/2172 training to become qualified in mental health first aid and peer support.

What is the importance of mental health awareness and education?

Education provides insight into mental health conditions, fostering empathy and support. When you better understand mental health, you can tie it into wellness and prevention in support of overall health.

How should someone seek help if they suspect they have a mental health issue?

The first step is to talk to someone or seek professional help through a therapist. The 988 crisis hotline is also available.



Jason Hebbert
Local 725 TD
Pipe PALS Advisory
Committee Secretary

How can we overcome the challenges you see in addressing mental health within our community?

Because of the stigma surrounding mental health, many people still feel ashamed to seek help. We need to normalize open dialogue and sharing personal stories: "It's ok to be not ok." Other challenges are the lack of resources and limited access to mental health services. Increased funding can help bridge this gap. A lack of education and awareness means we need to do more to inform our folks about mental health issues. Financial barriers also prevent some people from getting help, so expanding low-cost or free services will improve access to care. By addressing these challenges through targeted initiatives and community involvement, we can create a more supportive environment for our members who are struggling with mental health.



PJ Moss
Local 32 TD
Pipe PALS Advisory
Committee Resource
Coordinator

Why is the Pipe PALS Advisory Committee important to you?

Like many others, I've struggled with mental health, and so have people close to me. Until we can be comfortable talking about it, mental health struggles will continue to hurt those we care about. I want to help us make conversations about mental health as much a part of our everyday routine as talking about jobsite safety.

What motivates you personally to promote mental health in our Industry?

It wasn't something that I thought about until one of my mentors opened up to me about talking to someone when they were struggling. That conversation made me take a hard look in the mirror and realize I needed to swallow my pride. If someone I held in high regard could admit to asking for help, then why couldn't I? I want to help others realize that any one of us can make that difference in someone's life. Whether I can pay that forward to one person or a hundred, I am going to do what I can to empower our brothers and sisters to be there for themselves or anyone else they care about.

How can we address the most common mental health issues people face today?

We all deal with stress—stemming from work stress, family issues, medical problems, and financial concerns that manifest themselves in their own way. Stress can lead us into a cycle of self-doubt, depression, or destructive habits. The best way to start addressing mental health is to show people that it's ok to have discussions about it. Let people know that others have walked this path and are willing to walk it alongside someone else who is struggling. Life is a lot easier when you don't feel you have to do it alone.

What changes have you seen in the approach to mental health over the past few years?

This one is easy: we are talking about it and then following up with action. The leadership conversations throughout our industry have begun to normalize a conversation that few were willing to have even five years ago. Discussions and actions around mental health need to be as second nature to our industry as jobsite safety. We have done it, we know it's possible, and we have the template.

How can people get involved or volunteer to support mental health efforts?

Find out what resources your local already has in place. Many of them have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which sadly is often underutilized. Call to find out how the benefits you already have work, then help spread the word. Be prepared with information if you are in a spot where someone you know needs immediate help. Your local may be looking to send people to regional training classes, or willing to host VitalCog trainings. If you are interested in learning more to help our brothers and sisters, talk to your business manager or training director.

What is the importance of mental health awareness and education?

Training and education help us all learn about things that we don't understand, and be more comfortable with what many of us consider an uncomfortable topic. The more we know, the easier it is for us to appropriately and successfully help someone who needs it.

How should someone seek help if they suspect they have a mental health issue?

If you have access to an EAP, that would be the first resource I would try, or in a severe situation, call 988. In my personal experience, many people just need someone to show compassion and be there to listen. Remember that people are unique and each scenario will be as well.

How can we overcome the challenges you see in addressing mental health within our community?

The biggest challenge is ourselves. Many of us are the toughest people we know—just ask us. We need to help our brothers and sisters see that being willing to talk about our own struggles, asking for help, showing compassion are all things that make us strong. One of the hardest things I have ever done was walking into a counselor's office and telling someone I didn't know that I needed help. Every one of us is a leader to someone in our life. Showing strength and compassion will change our culture and change the lives of our members and their families for the better. ■

Pipe PALS Program a Shining Example for Mental Health

The Pipe PALS program is a priority, and a source of pride, as stated by United Association General President Mark McManus and General Secretary-Treasurer Derrick Kualapai in an article about Mental Health Awareness Month in the May/June issue of *The United Association Journal*.



"My pride in this program is twofold," said McManus. "This initiative dives into not only the bright and positive things ... but rightfully serves us during those dark and negative times ... The second is simply the human factor. Programs and initiatives such as this can and will save lives. ..." McManus encourages all local unions, as well as the UA offices, to invest in and utilize Pipe PALS resources. These tools will help our organization make positive changes in our everyday well-being, and let any of our members who feel isolated know they have a UA family backing them.

"In our lifetime, we've changed safety on our jobsites—no small task. I see every opportunity ahead for us to change the culture of mental health," said McManus.

Kualapai adds context about mental health in the construction industry specifically. "Mental health issues are often overshadowed by the demanding physical aspects of the job," he says. "As a result, far too many of our members ... are struggling silently as they try to grapple with a whole range of serious mental health problems. ..."

Construction is a highly stressful industry, often requiring daily physical exertion and difficult or dangerous conditions while juggling demanding schedules and tight budgets. Workers also face job security issues, financial strain during slow times, and social isolation. All of these factors contribute to suicide rates higher than other industries. The stigma associated with talking about mental health issues doesn't help.

"I strongly believe the UA and labor unions generally should serve as advocates for members by championing their rights and well-being both on and off the jobsite," said Kualapai. He outlines several key areas where the UA can and is taking a more active role in supporting members and shining a light on mental health issues:

- Awareness and education through workshops, materials, and open discussions.
- Access to resources by partnering with mental health organizations and service providers, and expanding mental health benefits.

- Training and skills development to equip workers to help with suicide prevention, stress management, and peer support.
- Advocacy and policy reform, utilizing the powerful union voice to drive government and industry prioritization of mental healthcare.
- Moving forward to build a culture of support in our industry and beyond.

McManus concluded with his heartfelt thanks to the UA leadership in the Veterans in Piping (VIP) program and other administrative leaders, along with the Pipe PALS advisory committee, for all of their groundwork and continuing support. He also calls out to the UA membership, saying, “I thank each of you who has reached out to one brother or sister in need. Sometimes it is just a small act of kindness or acknowledgment that can help someone turn the page to a new day ... My challenge to our UA membership is to continue the good work and step up for our brothers and sisters.” ■

Bring the Benefits of VitalCog Training to Your Local

By Ben Bradshaw, Local 100 Business Manager

Have you ever been concerned about someone’s well-being but you didn’t know how to reach out to them? You wanted to help but didn’t know what to say? VitalCog is the answer.

VitalCog is a two-hour training session developed by the Helen and Arthur E. Johnson Depression Center, which is a part of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado. UA members have already put the skills they learned in this brief, easy-to-facilitate training session to work helping their brothers and sisters in need and saving lives. Within days of leading a VitalCog session, trainers have often heard from a person who took the class saying they had already used their new skills to intervene with someone who was considering suicide.

The beauty of VitalCog is its simplicity and effectiveness. Members learn to identify risk factors and warning signs of someone who may be considering suicide. The course also instructs participants on how to converse with a person in crisis and what resources to share. Because of VitalCog training, there are people alive today who most likely would not be otherwise.

Right now, as you read this, you have members struggling and possibly planning their own death. Suicide has ripple effects throughout families and communities for years and possibly generations to come. Enough is enough. We have lost far too many members to suicide. You have the power to fight this and help end this plague today.

As labor leaders, our main priority is the well-being of our members and their families. Requesting VitalCog training is an easy and painless step to take to make a significant impact in our members’ lives. The UA continues to add to its existing roster of trained VitalCog instructors who can be rapidly deployed to your local to lead training sessions at little to no expense. Please contact Jen Massey at jmassey@uanet.org to schedule a time and instructor for this brief but very powerful training. ■

VitalCog Takes Root in Canada

Insights from Alanna Marklund, Special Representative, Youth, Diversity and Indigenous Relations, UA Canada



I am so grateful that the conversation around mental health has changed over the last couple of years, and so proud that the UA has put this topic at the forefront of our initiatives. I have facilitated training for over 120 members, with many more classes scheduled for this year. We are seeing an increase in support of mental health efforts throughout our organization and more people encouraging members to use available resources and take care of themselves.

As we talk about mental health, I am noticing people opening up and sharing their experiences to help someone else in need. We know that mental health conditions can affect absolutely anyone, at any point in their lives. It’s something we should never be ashamed to address.

I am motivated to promote mental health and wellness in our industry because I have seen how working through anxiety, depression or substance use can impact someone’s life. Some people may suffer from severe depression that gets released as anger or irritability, while others enter into incredible sadness, despair, or debilitating anxiety. Fortunately, I also see people who have discovered coping strategies to help work through it.

No shame in getting help

Mental wellness is just as important as physical health, and it shouldn't be taboo to talk about it. Just as we see a doctor when we are ill, we should be able to take care of our mental health before entering a crisis zone. These conditions get worse when we are afraid to talk about them or seek assistance. Everyone deserves to have the help they may need, when they need it. There is no shame in that.

Everyone's experience is different, and what works for some might not work for all. That's why it's ideal to have access to a range of options to find what works best. Seeking professional help for any mental health condition, whether perceived as big or small, deserves treatment.

If you or someone you know is having a tough time, please call the 988 crisis line, your employee assistance program (EAP) or a family doctor or counsellor. Having used these programs myself, I know first-hand that having a conversation with a trained professional who has no bias towards your situation can help. They are equipped with information and tools to help you cope and process whatever you are going through. It truly it can make a world of difference.

Learn and listen

I believe we have the opportunity to help people help themselves by showing them support, compassion and empathy. Mental health awareness and education builds both of these. Generally speaking, when someone you know is facing a mental health situation, being an active listener, and showing empathy and compassion are important steps towards helping them get the assistance they need.

Members can expand their knowledge and develop new skills through training opportunities that the UA offers, including VitalCog, or the 2171 and 2172 peer support courses. Education ensures that when we see signs that someone may be struggling, we are better equipped to help and point them to the appropriate resources.

The road forward

Although societal and self-stigmas can be a barrier to seeking help, the more we as a community encourage others to take care of their mental health, the more we will see changes in the right direction. When we emphasize that mental health conditions are not something to be ashamed of or a sign of weakness, we highlight that reaching out is not a burden. ■

Maternity Benefits are Good for the Construction Industry

In addition to being supportive of our members' careers and families, the UA Maternity Benefit Plan is good for our organization. These benefits help us recruit and retain our valued, skilled women workers. The plan is an appealing aspect of union membership, along with higher wages, safer working conditions and other key benefits.

Members in good standing may apply to receive the benefit of \$500 per week, up to six weeks, for a possible total of \$3,000. Since the program's inception in November 2022, nearly 80 members representing 38 locals have received the maternity benefit, totaling more than \$230,000 paid out to date.

To file for the benefit, members go to:

- UANet.org, then click on Tools/Resources, Forms, United Association Maternity Benefit Plan, online claim form

For more information, contact Rosemarie Hechinger, rhechinger@uanet.org or 410-269-2000, ext. 5104. ■

SAFETY AT WORK



OSHA Overview on Priorities and Enforcement

In a June presentation to the AFL-CIO's Executive Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, Douglas Parker, Assistant Secretary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, presented a snapshot of the agency's 10-year enforcement statistics and current rulemaking priorities.

Fatal occupational injuries and illness data set the stage for both topics. In the U.S., there were 5,486 fatal work injuries reported in 2022, according to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, which calculates to 15 people losing their lives on the job every day. Workers of color die on the job at a higher rate.

It makes sense that OSHA enforcement rates all dipped in 2020-2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic when there was a severe worksite slowdown and fewer people on the job. OSHA inspections have not quite reached the high of more

than 39,000 in 2013, but at more than 34,000, the number of inspections in 2023 is the highest since 2015.

The number of new Severe Violator Enforcement Program (SVEP) inspections skyrocketed in 2023 to 287, compared to 81 in 2022, and more than doubled in previous years. Significant and egregious cases are also on the rise. OSHA issued a record 377 high-penalty inspections in 2023, with 276 at the \$100,000 rate, and 101 at \$250,000-plus. The previous high was in 2020 with a total of 240.

OSHA's rulemaking priorities encompass topics familiar to the UA, including the walkaround rule, hazardous communications, emergency response, heat illness prevention, and both infectious disease and workplace violence in health care.

The presentation concluded with information on mental health at work, citing that workplace suicides increased by 13.1% in 2022, moving the topic into the occupational safety and health space. OSHA recognizes that employees are reluctant to seek help, but mental health adversely affects social interaction and can decrease productivity. Resources are available at [osha.gov](https://www.osha.gov). ■

Heat Injury is a Hot Topic

Rebecca Reindel, Safety and Health Director at the AFL-CIO, gave a presentation to the agency's Safety and Health Executive Committee. She discussed the overall landscape of "Working in Hot Environments" and answered two questions: Why is it difficult for the U.S. to protect workers when the hazards and solutions are obvious, and what can be done in the absence of a federal heat standard?

In answer to the first question, she stated that several challenges are impeding progress on worker protection. For one, it takes a long time. The federal OSHA rulemaking process takes seven to 10 years. Another challenge is OSHA coverage and resources. There are just 6.7 federal OSHA compliance officers per one million U.S. workers, well below the International Labour Organization (ILO) benchmark of one per 10,000. It would take 186 years for Federal OSHA to inspect every workplace once.

Reindel also cited that [anti-regulatory actions](#) in effect in some states that limit or eliminate heat protections could disproportionately affect vulnerable worker populations. Finally, the current emphasis on monitoring behavior at individual workplaces does not correct large-scale issues with employment structures and requirements.

What can be done?

There are opportunities for change and actions underway. Several entities are working towards a federal standard, which would be supported by federal legislation introduced in 2021, the Asunción Valdivia Heat Illness, Injury, and Fatality Prevention Act, which, if passed, directs OSHA to issue a comprehensive heat standard. A [new bill](#) seeks to extend protection to public sector employees. OSHA's National Advisory Committee on Occupational Safety and Health delivered its Heat Working Group recommendations in May, and OSHA has significantly increased its annual enforcement target for heat illness. States and cities can establish their own regulations. Better employer reporting requirements would help as well.

Most notably for the UA, Reindel mentions that unions can work within collective bargaining rights, and enhance their own efforts to educate and support employees directly.

You can learn more about heat safety and its risk context in the AFL-CIO's 2024 Annual Report, "[Death on the Job, The Toll of Neglect.](#)" ■

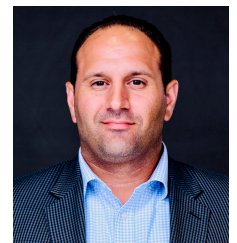
More Guidance for Safe Summer Work

OSHA has announced a proposed rule titled, Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings, a significant step toward a federal standard. The rule is explained in this [fact sheet](#) and highlights the hazards construction workers face during the summer. CPWR, the Center for Construction Research and Training, offers a range of resources to help organizations and employees learn about the new rule. Find free materials, including Toolbox Talks, Hazard Alert Cards, infographics, on-demand webinars, and checklists for heat-related illness prevention plans on CPWR's [Heat Hazards webpage](#). ■

The Insider's Guide to Accident Investigations

The latest video from MCAA

No one wants to think about accidents on a jobsite, but being prepared to investigate one is an important step



in prevention. The MCAA's [newest safety and health video](#) walks supervisors through the three steps of an accident investigation: Investigate, Find the Cause, and Act. The video, which is available to all UA members in English and Spanish, shows investigators what to look for and where to access useful templates.

Properly done investigations show that companies care about their employees and are serious about preventing future incidents, which has the added benefit of saving money.

The MCAA's full library of videos and health resources is available [here](#). For more information, please contact Raffi Elchemmas, the MCAA's Executive Director of Safety, Health, and Risk Management, at raffi@mcaa.org. ■

Summary of the 2021 Pulse Survey on Mental Health and Well-Being in the Construction Industry

Suicide rates in the construction industry rank near or are at the top among major industries. Mental health conditions influence suicide up to 90% of the time. Multiple factors contribute to the elevated rates of suicide and mental health issues in construction, including:

- A male-dominated industry that values toughness and strength
- There is a fear of consequences or judgment for seeking help
- Construction workers often suffer from chronic pain
- High-stress, long hours, deadline-driven work environment
- Seasonal, cyclical work that strains finances and family life

The U.S. construction industry has made significant progress in addressing mental health and suicide prevention, but there is more that can be done. A consortium of four organizations conducted a pulse survey beginning in March 2021 to better understand mental health experiences and needs in the construction industry. The online survey consisted of 20 questions focused on leadership engagement, mental health awareness, organizational culture, and access to services and support. The survey was distributed in all regions of the U.S. through a range of construction industry and labor organizations, and 1,175 people responded.

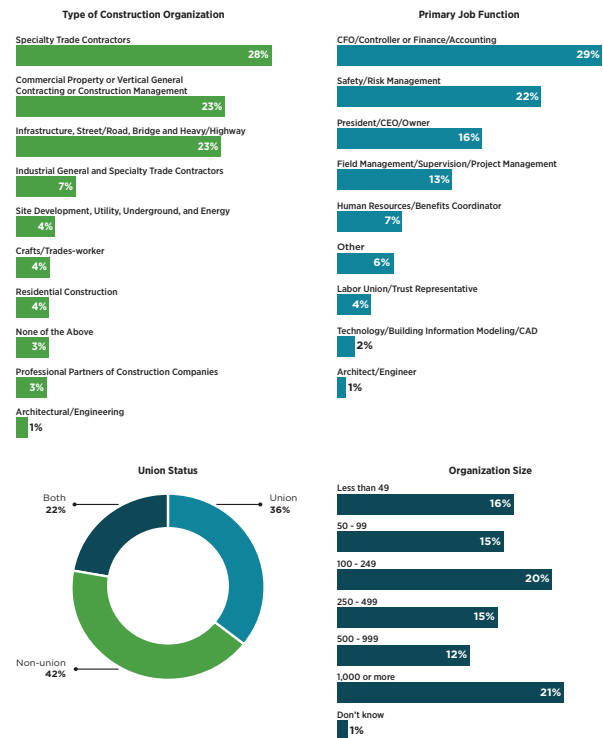
The survey findings reveal how issues are viewed at multiple levels of construction organizations and provide recommendations for what's needed to support the mental health and

well-being of construction workers. Across industries, organizations that identify mental health and well-being as a top priority see it as a path to improving safety, quality performance, productivity, employee recruitment and retention, and the bottom line. When people believe that an organization cares about their well-being, they will care about the organization.

Key findings

Forty-five percent of survey respondents represented C-Suite leaders, indicating that these issues are important to construction leadership.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



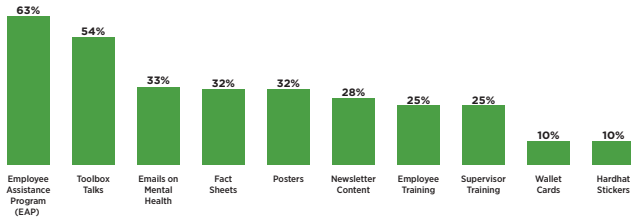
Active and continuous leadership plays a key role in building a caring culture that addresses worker well-being. Survey responses showed that among company leaders, there is broad support for making mental health a priority and encouraging people to get help. Presidents, CEOs, and owners were most favorable at 77%, followed by safety and risk managers at 72%. CFOs, controllers, and finance respondents were less favorable at 48%. A resounding 93% of respondents agreed that addressing mental health at work is a sound business practice.

Ninety-four percent of survey respondents say it's important to share mental health resources with workers to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage people to get help.

Raising Mental Health Awareness: Resources & Strategies

Organizations in the construction industry recognize the value of making mental health more visible and sharing resources. This serves to educate workers about mental health, reduces stigma, and shows organizational commitment to worker mental health and well-being.

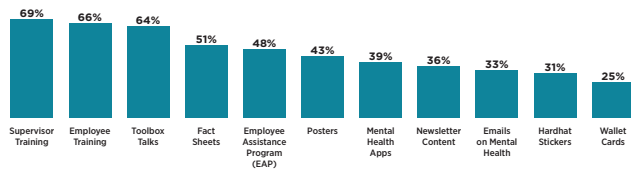
Mental Health Resources Respondent Organizations Make Available to Workers



94%

of all survey respondents recognize the importance of sharing mental health resources with workers to raise mental health awareness, reduce stigma, and encourage people to get help when it's needed.

Mental Health Resources Respondent Organizations Identified as MOST HELPFUL to Share with Employees



The responses show that construction organizations value training, yet only 25% of respondents currently offer supervisor and worker mental health training. This is an area with potential since 69% of respondents said supervisor training would be helpful, and 66% are in favor of worker training.

Creating a mentally healthy organizational culture

In a world where there is increased stress, anxiety, depression, and death by suicide or overdose, creating a caring culture at work is a business imperative. It can lead to higher retention rates, increased performance and productivity, and better business results.

In a caring culture, people feel a sense of connection with peers and feel valued within the organization. They are encouraged to take care of their mental and physical health and can reach out for help when they need to. The survey showed that organizations are recognizing the role they can play in breaking down barriers to people accessing care.

Caring organizational cultures embrace a sustained commitment to engaging with employees about mental health, distributing resources through multiple channels, and creating an environment where everyone feels safe to seek help and talk about mental health issues. When asked about how comfortable they are talking to a supervisor or co-worker about mental health, survey responses were generally on the low side.

Why workers may not seek help when they need it

The survey produced strong consensus about the top four reasons why workers who need help with mental health or substance misuse may not seek care:

- 78% shame and stigma
- 77% fear of judgment by peers
- 55% fear of negative job consequences
- 46% don't know how to access care

Bottom line recommendations

Leadership engagement: Articulate a vision and implement policies that clearly prioritize mental health. Leaders must be visible, vocal, and vulnerable on the topic.

Mental health awareness: Integrate a full scope of resources, information, and policies on mental health, substance misuse, suicide prevention, and worker well-being into existing areas, including human resources, employee benefits, and safety and health. Show a sustained commitment and share a continuous stream of information. Offer training to managers and supervisors. Consider cultural and language requirements.

Organizational culture: Build a caring culture. Clearly convey that seeking help is encouraged and will not have negative job consequences. Create a mentorship or peer support initiative. Consider the risks and messages associated with offering alcohol and company events. Support suicide prevention efforts.

Access to services and support: Assess how well your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) addresses your organization and worker needs. Educate employees about all that it offers. Remove barriers to access mental health and medical care by expanding education for workers and their families, changing or expanding EAP coverage, including labor union partners in education efforts, and taking many other specific actions. ■

Safety Awareness Dates and Events for Your Calendar

September 10, [World Suicide Prevention Day](#)

U.S.

July, [UV Safety Month](#)

August 7-9, [Safety 24 Conference](#) [ASSP]

August 12-20, [Safe + Sound Week](#) (OSHA)

September, [National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month](#)

September 9-13, [Construction Suicide Prevention Week](#)

September 20, [Concussion Awareness Day](#)

Canada

September, [Concussion Awareness Month](#)

If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please contact:



[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)— a free and confidential (U.S.) resource that connects individuals with skilled, trained counselors 24/7. Call 988 or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) Use the [online Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) or or reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting “HELLO” to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor.