



# Safety News

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

Summer 2025 | Issue 33

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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.

## Message from Jennifer Massey

### Health, Safety, and Environmental Administrator



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we enter another season of growth and progress in our trade, I would like to take a moment to thank each of you for your ongoing commitment to safety, health, and environmental responsibility. The work we do is critical, not just to the infrastructure of our countries, but to the well-being of our families and communities. That's why protecting one another, both on and off the job, remains our highest priority.

In this issue, you'll find resources and reminders on heat illness prevention, ergonomics, mental health, and stop work authority. These topics aren't just checkboxes, they are lifelines. Whether it's stretching before a shift, taking a water break, or checking in with a coworker who doesn't seem like themselves, every small action adds up to a stronger, safer workforce.

I want to emphasize that every UA member has the right, and the responsibility, to speak up if something doesn't feel safe. You should never feel hesitant to stop work, ask questions, or advocate for your well-being. That's not weakness; it's leadership. And leadership in safety belongs to all of us.

Let's keep looking out for one another, honoring our trade, and holding ourselves to the highest standards—not only in the quality of our work, but also in how we protect each other.

Stay safe, stay strong, and thank you for everything you do. ■

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## Message from General President Mark McManus

Brothers and Sisters,

"I'm honored to announce that the UA's 'Mental Health Monday' social media video series has received a Silver Telly Award in the Social Video-Health and Wellness category. The award was announced just last month, and I would like to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of the Pipe PALS Committee, along with the Unionwide staff who filmed and



*produced the videos, and every member who has embraced this critical initiative. By participating in our mental health training, we contribute to the effort to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health challenges and gain effective tools to support our brothers and sisters. I am proud that the UA has and will continue to lead the way in changing the culture of mental health wellness in the construction industry."*

## TRAINING



### 2025 OSHA Outreach Training

#### OSHA 510 Course 2150

##### OSHA Standards for the Construction Industry

July 14-17, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Ann Arbor, MI  
 September 29 - October 2, 2025 ..... 10:00am - 4:30pm ..... Online (Zoom)  
 December 8-12, 2025 ..... 10:00am - 4:30pm ..... Online (Zoom)

#### OSHA 500 Course 2151

##### Trainer Course in Occupational Safety and Health Standards for Construction

October 13-17, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Ann Arbor, MI  
 December 8-12, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Ann Arbor, MI

#### OSHA 502 Course 2152

##### Update for Construction Industry Outreach Trainers

July 14-17, 2025 ..... 10:00am - 4:30pm ..... Online (Zoom)  
 September 22-25, 2025 ..... 10:00am - 4:30pm ..... Online (Zoom)  
 December 15-18, 2025 ..... 10:00am - 4:30pm ..... Online (Zoom)

#### 2154 Safe Bolting Principles and Practices

December 9-10, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Ann Arbor, MI

#### 2170 Opioids in the Workplace

October 6-9, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Online (Zoom)  
 November 3-6, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Online (Zoom)

#### 2171 Introduction to Peer Support Skills and Mental Health Literacy

September 30 - October 2, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Dallas, TX

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

July 15-17, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Opa-Locka, FL  
 November 18-20, 2025 ..... 8:00am - 5:00pm ..... Dallas, TX

## HEALTH AT WORK



### UA Pipe PALS Mental Health Series Earns National Telly Award



The United Association is proud to announce that its "Mental Health Monday" social media video series has been honored with a Silver Telly Award in the Social Video-Health and Wellness category of the 46th annual Telly competition. Announced in May, this prestigious recognition affirms the UA's unwavering commitment to prioritizing mental health for all members across the trades.

Honoring video and television excellence, the Telly Awards are among the industry's most respected prizes. Winners were selected from more than 13,000 global entries by a panel of more than 250 professionals representing major networks, production studios, and creative agencies, including Netflix, Adobe, BBDO, and Roku.

The Mental Health Monday video campaign, produced by Unionwide in partnership with the UA and its Pipe PALS Committee, features a compelling series of short-form videos designed to normalize conversations around mental health. The series showcases UA members and leaders discussing critical issues such as depression, suicide prevention, anxiety, and substance use—all within the unique context of the skilled trades.

This award is a win not just for our production team or Pipe PALS, it's a win for every UA member who had the courage to speak up, to ask for help, or to check in with a fellow brother or sister. We are leading the way in transforming the culture of mental health in the construction industry.

Announced during Mental Health Awareness Month, the award's timing is especially powerful. It underscores the UA's growing leadership in embedding mental health as a core component of jobsite safety, alongside hard hats, safety glasses, and fall protection.

In an industry that has historically valued toughness and silence, the UA's message is clear: Mental health is jobsite safety. By producing digestible, authentic, and emotionally powerful content, the Mental Health Monday series opens the door for real dialogue and intervention.

As the campaign continues to gain traction, all locals are encouraged to:

- Share the Mental Health Monday videos through internal communications and social media channels.
- Host Toolbox Talks or safety huddles that incorporate the video content.
- Connect members to local and national resources, including the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

The Telly Award places the UA in the company of elite producers and changemakers, including past winners such as NASA, National Geographic, and the Walt Disney Company. More importantly, it reflects the power of solidarity and story, reminding us all that it's okay not to be okay, and that we are stronger together.

To view the full list of winners and learn more, visit the [Telly Awards site](#). ■

## Suicide Prevention: It's Okay to Ask Directly



Suicide is a heavy word, one that carries pain, confusion, and often silence. But in the trades, silence can be deadly. Within the United Association, we're working to change that. We know that mental health is just as critical as physical safety, and we are committed to breaking the stigma that keeps our brothers and sisters suffering in the dark.

The truth is that the most powerful tool in suicide prevention isn't complicated. It's not a clinical intervention or a training manual. It's a conversation. It's simply asking, **"Are you thinking about suicide?"** That one question can open a door to hope, to help, and to healing.

It might feel uncomfortable to ask. Many people fear that bringing it up might "put the idea" in someone's head. But research and real-world experience prove the opposite. Asking directly shows you care. It gives someone permission to speak about the unbearable, and sometimes that's all they need to keep going another day.

## Know the Signs

Recognizing the warning signs of suicide is essential. Often, they are subtle. Some of the most common indicators include:

- **Talking about being a burden.** They may say things like, "You'd be better off without me" or "I can't do anything right."
- **Giving away meaningful items.** These gestures, especially if they seem out of the blue, can be a sign of preparing for an end.
- **Withdrawing from friends, family, or coworkers.** Isolating behavior, missing work, or sudden disinterest in activities they once enjoyed can be red flags.

Other signs may include drastic mood swings, reckless behavior, substance abuse, or expressions of hopelessness. If something feels off, don't ignore it. Trust your gut.

## What You Can Do

You don't have to be a counselor to help. You just need to be present, willing to listen, and unafraid to ask the hard question. When you ask, do so directly and without judgment. Say something like: "I've noticed you haven't seemed like yourself lately. Are you okay? Are you thinking about hurting yourself?"

If the answer is yes, don't panic. Stay with them. Listen. Let them talk. Then help them connect to the right resources. Call or text **988**, the **National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**, anytime, day or night. It's free, confidential, and staffed by trained counselors.

## Changing the Culture

The United Association is proud to support national and local efforts to prioritize suicide prevention. Through our Pipe PALS initiative, Vital Cog training, and our award-winning Mental Health Monday series, we are creating a culture that values well-being and human connection.

Suicide doesn't have to be a silent killer in the trades. By checking in with each other, really checking in, we can save lives.

Call or text 988 if you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues. The UA stands behind you, and we are working to change the culture of silence. ■

## Why I Believe Peer Support and Mental Health Literacy Training is Essential for Our Industry and Ourselves

By William Marable, Training Coordinator, Local 372

The construction industry is facing a shortage of competent and experienced workers. While the United Association actively recruits and trains workers to meet demand, we and the rest of the industry throughout North America are struggling to retain them. One reason we are losing workers is mental health. In the U.S. alone, there are 5,000 worker suicides **daily**. The UA is working to address this crisis in many ways, locally and nationally. Among our strongest training tools are courses 2171 and 2172, which enhance mental health knowledge through a peer support model.

### Course 2171 Description – Introduction to Peer Support and Mental Health Literacy

This course is designed to enhance trainers' mental health literacy and peer support expertise with an emphasis on knowledge, skills, and confidence. In this course, students will develop an understanding of the value, fundamentals, and practices of peer support skills. By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of mental health literacy, find shared meaningful experiences with peers, express empathy through reflections, and demonstrate active listening skills. Students will also be able to assist in connecting people who are struggling to specialty professional services such as crisis counseling and addiction recovery services.

I have been involved with UA Regional and ITP training since 2006, and 2171 is one of my favorites as a participant. While the course description is accurate, it does not capture the full experience on emotional, physical, and mental levels. I'd like to share some of my experiences to help others better understand the full value of the course.

Upon arrival at UA Local 725 in Miami, coordinator Jason Hebert welcomed us, and I noticed right away that attendee participation was almost immediate. By the end of the first day, most people were opening up about things that we as a society don't usually talk about.

Over the next few days of class, it only got better. The men and women taking the class had wildly different backgrounds, life experiences, and traumas that defined them. The instructors guided the group

to a place where all felt safe to share—the good, the bad, and the heartbreaking. As someone who had not endured those intense experiences, I felt at first that maybe I didn't have the skills or tools to help and didn't belong there, but the instructors fixed that. By day three, I had a different mental approach for what I was experiencing. I was better able to listen and help those around me.

Fundamentally, I had changed with support from the attendees and the fantastic instructors: Dr. Sally Spencer Thomas, Edwardo Vega, and Sarah Geer. UA instructors included Joe Hock, Omar Galindo, and Brian Murphy, plus UA Pipe PALS representative Jason Hebert. While each has a different background and experiences, they were all efficient, competent, direct, and humble. I am personally grateful to these instructors, and know that they are doing great things for the UA and the members of their own locals. I am looking forward to my next step: Course 2172.

After completing both 2171 and 2172, UA members are qualified to teach the VitalCog course that covers warning signs of suicide in the workplace. The UA has recently received notification of a great addition to our OSHA 30 training: VitalCog training can now be used as a two-hour elective in our OSHA 30 courses.

I have a request for all UA locals: Send your instructors, coordinators, agents, and managers to take Course 2171 if possible. We **all** need the information and skills taught in this course to better help our members, their families, and our communities as the content of this training flows into our private lives. Through training and implementing what we learn, we can help not only retain workers but also improve their mental health and safety. ■







## Peer Ally Program Provides Light and Hope for People in Despair

In 2023, Local 100 launched its Saving Our Siblings (S.O.S.) program. This peer ally program, which focuses on suicide prevention, mental health, and addiction issues, now has more than 40 members. All S.O.S. members have completed the VitalCog training, and many have also taken the UA 2171 class, Introduction to Peer Support Skills and Mental Health Literacy, as well as Narcan training.

S.O.S. members come from all different backgrounds, experiences, and ages. Business Manager Ben Bradshaw believes this is key to the program's success. "When I launched this program in spring 2023, I felt it was very important to gather a group of volunteers that truly reflected our membership," Ben said. "Sometimes when people are struggling, they want to turn to someone whom they can relate to and feel comfortable with. A diverse group of peer allies helps to remove obstacles to someone opening up and seeking help."

Peer allies are not expected to be therapists. Instead, they are bridges between members who are struggling and the resources that can help. When someone is lost in the darkness of despair and feels like there's no one to turn to, a peer ally can provide light and hope.

Once a local builds out a peer ally program, the next step is to make sure that all members are aware of the program and how to access it. Local 100 continues to do this through member outreach at union meetings, jobsite visits, member events, and social media promotion. S.O.S. stickers with a QR code are found on hardhats and magnets on job boxes all across Local 100. The QR code links members to a page on the Local 100 website, with pictures and contact info for all the peer allies, plus information on how to utilize the membership assistance program.

Another challenge for mental health and addiction program success is the wall of stigma surrounding the topics. For UA members, sharing our struggles can be very difficult and intimidating. The fear of opening up only to be ostracized is common. S.O.S. seeks to lead by example and break down the stigma. During the program's launch, Ben Bradshaw set the stage by publicly sharing his personal

struggles at the union meeting, stating, "I truly wanted this program to work. I figured that if the membership saw their business manager being vulnerable, they would be more likely to feel it was ok to open up and seek help for their own issues. The response I received confirmed that."

There is hope



If you would like more information on building out a peer ally program at your local, reach out to [pipepals@uanet.org](mailto:pipepals@uanet.org) for more information. ■

## SAFETY AT WORK



### Heat Illness Prevention

#### Stay Cool, Stay Safe: Prepare for Heat Hazards on the Job

As the summer months approach, workers on construction sites across

the U.S. and Canada will face increased risks associated with extreme heat. For members of the United Association, the dangers of heat-related illnesses are not theoretical, they are real, recurring, and often entirely preventable. Every year, UA members are exposed to high temperatures that can lead to heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and severe dehydration.

With hotter days on the horizon, it's time for every local, contractor, and job steward to prioritize proactive heat illness prevention. That means reinforcing the fundamentals:

- **Hydrate often;** don't wait until you're thirsty.
- **Take scheduled breaks** in shaded or air-conditioned areas.
- **Know the symptoms** of heat-related illness: dizziness, fatigue, confusion, heavy sweating, nausea, and rapid pulse.

These aren't just tips. They are potentially lifesaving practices.

#### Federal Standard on the Way

In a historic move, OSHA is working on finalizing its first-ever federal Heat Illness Prevention Standard. This long-anticipated rule would require employers to:

- Provide workers with drinking water.
- Ensure access to shade or cooling areas.

- Allow rest breaks when the heat index exceeds specific thresholds.
- Implement Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Plans (HIIPPs).
- Train workers and supervisors to recognize and respond to heat-related symptoms

A **virtual public hearing** on the proposed rule is scheduled for **June 16, 2025**. This rule has been years in the making, and the UA has supported its passage. Until it becomes official, states that have already implemented a rule or local-level prevention remain our frontline defense.

## Why This Matters

The construction trades are particularly vulnerable to heat illness due to the nature of the work, which is physically demanding, often performed in full personal protective equipment (PPE), with limited shade and exposure to reflective surfaces such as concrete and metal. According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, construction accounts for a disproportionate share of heat-related workplace deaths. These aren't isolated incidents, they are system failures that can and must be prevented.

The UA is committed to changing that narrative. Safety committees, stewards, and foremen must normalize rest and hydration, not punish them. Safety culture means recognizing that pushing through extreme heat isn't a sign of toughness; it's a risk to your health, your crew, and your family.

## Action Steps for Prevention

- Develop or update a heat illness prevention plan that includes daily monitoring of temperature and humidity.
- Review work-rest cycles and allow flexibility based on conditions.
- Stock up on water stations, cooling towels, fans, and shaded break areas.
- Train crews on signs and symptoms of heat illness and what to do if someone is in distress.
- Empower workers to speak up and stop work if heat conditions become unsafe.
- Remind workers to hydrate frequently, take scheduled shade breaks, and recognize early symptoms, such as dizziness, heavy sweating, and nausea.

The UA continues to advocate for a federal Heat Illness Prevention Standard. Until it becomes law, proactive local measures are crucial. Build a culture that normalizes breaks and hydration as essential safety measures, not signs of weakness.

As temperatures rise, so must our vigilance to prevent heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and dehydration. This summer, beat the heat, don't let it beat us. Let's ensure every UA member goes home the same way they showed up: healthy, safe, and hydrated. ■



Safety  
Takes  
Official  
Priority

## Stop Work Authority: Empowering UA Members to Prioritize Safety

In the United Association, safety isn't a slogan, it's a shared responsibility. Every member, from apprentice to journeyman to foreman, has both the **right** and the **responsibility** to stop work if they believe a task is unsafe. This principle is known as **Stop Work Authority (SWA)**, and it is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent injuries, fatalities, and job site incidents.

SWA is not about slowing down progress or second-guessing authority. It is about protecting lives and reinforcing a culture where safety always comes first. If something feels wrong, unclear, or hazardous, it probably is. And that's your cue to speak up.

## What Triggers a Stop Work Action?

You don't need to be a safety professional to recognize danger. Exercise SWA when you notice:

- **Unclear procedures.** If a job task isn't properly explained, lacks a risk assessment, or you haven't received the necessary instructions, stop and clarify.
- **Missing PPE.** No personal protective equipment (PPE)? The wrong gear for the task? PPE that's damaged or expired? It's time to stop.
- **Poor communication.** If team members are confused about roles, signals, or sequencing, or if language barriers exist, don't proceed until everyone is aligned.
- **Unfamiliar conditions.** Weather, confined spaces, and unexpected equipment behavior can all introduce new risks that warrant reassessment.

## A Right and a Responsibility

Some workers hesitate to exercise SWA because they fear ridicule, retaliation, or being seen as a problem. But in the UA, we are working to erase that fear.

## Stopping work isn't insubordination; it's leadership.

You are doing your part to protect not only yourself, but also your brothers and sisters who are working alongside you.

Contractors, foremen, and stewards must reinforce this message daily: If it's not safe, don't do it. Full stop.

## Reinforcement from the Top Down

For Stop Work Authority to truly work, it must be built into the culture, not just posted on the wall or mentioned in orientation. That means:

- Supervisors must respond to stop work actions with support, not punishment.
- Near misses and interventions should be seen as learning opportunities, not liabilities.
- Daily huddles and toolbox talks should include open invitations for feedback and concerns.

When leaders model accountability and openness, they create an environment where speaking up is not only accepted but also expected.

## The Cost of Silence

Too many serious incidents begin with someone saying, "I knew something wasn't right." SWA empowers members to stop before an injury occurs, rather than investigate after the fact. One stop work action today could save a life tomorrow.

Every member has the authority. Every member has the obligation. Safety isn't someone else's job; it's everyone's job.

Let's continue to empower one another to act, protect, and lead, because nothing we build is more important than the people who build it. ■



## Ergonomics: Protecting the Body That Builds America

The skilled trades build and maintain the nation's infrastructure, but too often, it's done at the expense of our bodies. For our members, the physical demands of the job can take a long-term toll. Repetitive motion injuries, muscle strains, and overexertion are among the most common causes of lost time in our trade, and the most preventable.

That's where ergonomics comes in. Ergonomics is the science of adapting work to fit the worker, not forcing the worker to adapt to unsafe or inefficient conditions. When done right, it helps prevent injury, reduces fatigue, and allows members to stay in the trade longer and injury-free.

## Here's how we do it:

1. **Stretch and Flex Routines** - Throughout the day, do a brief warm-up to prepare the muscles and joints for the work ahead. Daily "stretch and flex" programs increase mobility, reduce injury risk, and foster a culture that puts safety first. Crews that stretch together stay stronger together.
2. **Job Rotation** - If possible, rotate physically demanding tasks throughout the day or among multiple workers. Prolonged kneeling, lifting, or overhead work can wear down even the strongest body. Rotating tasks spreads the load and reduces repetitive motion injuries.
3. **Use Mechanical Aids** - When lifting or transporting heavy materials, utilize equipment instead of relying solely on manual force. The right tool can prevent a strained back or torn shoulder.
4. **Report Discomfort Early** - Don't wait until the pain becomes unbearable. Early signs of discomfort, aches, tingling, or stiffness are your body's warning signals. Addressing issues early can prevent serious injuries and long-term damage.

Ergonomics is all about doing things smarter. We must prioritize the long-term health of our members just as much as the task at hand. Safety isn't just about helmets and harnesses; it's about preserving the body that builds America.

Repetitive motion and overexertion injuries remain among the most common for pipe trades workers. By encouraging members to report discomfort early and applying ergonomic solutions, we're helping people stay in the trade longer and injury-free. ■



## Arrive Alive: Safe Travel to and From the Job Site

For many members of the United Association, the workday begins well before stepping onto the job site. Whether workers commute by car, truck, bus, bike, or on foot, their journey to and from work can also be a dangerous part of the day, and one that is often overlooked in safety programs.

According to national statistics, motor vehicle incidents are the leading cause of occupational fatalities. Early start times, fatigue, poor weather,

and distracted driving all increase the risk of accidents. That's why safety must begin the moment we leave our homes.

## Safe Commuting Habits for UA Members

1. **Don't Text and Drive** - A quick glance at your phone, even at a red light, can be fatal. Keep your phone on silent or use hands-free tools if absolutely necessary. Nothing is more important than staying focused on the road.
2. **Be Visible** - If you walk or bike to work, wear high-visibility clothing, especially during early morning, dusk, or at night. Reflective vests and gear are visible up to 500 feet earlier than dark clothing.
3. **Carpool Safely** - Only ride with coworkers you trust to drive safely, and make sure the vehicle is in good condition. Bald tires, broken lights, and worn brakes significantly increase the risk of crashes. Don't be afraid to speak up if the vehicle or driver isn't safe.
4. **Plan for Conditions** - Allow extra time during adverse weather conditions, such as fog or icy roads. Rushing increases the risk of accidents. Factor in detours or traffic delays so you can arrive calm and focused.

Commuter awareness belongs in our safety programs. Help members arrive alive by talking about what can be a high-risk period of the day and how to manage it. ■■■

## Safety Awareness Dates and Events for Your Calendar

June 14, [World Blood Donor Day](#)  
June 9 - 15, [Men's Health Week](#)

### U.S.

June, [National Safety Month](#)  
June 1-7, [National CPR and AED Awareness Week](#)  
August 11-17, [OSHA Safe + Sound Week](#)

## 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 reach out to the Crisis Text Line by texting “HELLO” to 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor.