

Declining Mental Health and Suicide Risk

Mental Health Talk

Discuss with crews on

Explain Dangers!

Everyone has mental health concerns from time to time. But what some may consider “normal” challenges can develop into a mental *illness* if left unaddressed.

A **mental illness** is a medically diagnosed disorder that affects how a person thinks, behaves, and interacts with others. It can have a prolonged, negative effect on quality of life.

- By age 40, about 50% of people will have—or will have had—a mental illness.
- Approximately 11 Canadians die by suicide each day—about 4,000 people annually. Compare that to workplace-related fatalities, which are about three daily, or 1,017 per year.
- For every suicide death, there are an estimated 20 to 25 attempts. On average, 275 people attempt suicide in Canada every day.
- The mortality rate due to suicide among men is three times the rate among women. Men aged 45 to 59 are at greatest risk.
- The suicide rate in construction is four times greater than the North American average.

Construction workers are at a heightened risk for suicide for a number of reasons, such as injuries and illnesses that lead to chronic pain, exposure to traumatic events at work—and a culture that, historically, has discouraged discussing and seeking help for mental health concerns.

Until cultural change takes place, it is critical to learn the signs of declining mental health and suicide risk, and learn how to support someone who may be struggling with their mental health. Signs of declining mental health include:

- Increased substance (i.e., alcohol or drug) use
- Feelings or talk of helplessness or hopelessness; no sense of purpose in life
- Anxiety, agitation, or uncontrolled anger
- Ongoing complaints of being unable to sleep or sleeping all of the time; looking more fatigued than usual
- Talk about feelings of being trapped—like there's no way out of a situation
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and society
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities, seemingly without thinking.
- Dramatic mood changes.