



# Mental Health, Substance Use & Suicide Prevention Task Force

Suicide Postvention

Quarterly Forum

January 16, 2025

[safeproject.us](https://safeproject.us)



# Contact Information



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# Continuing Education Credits

## How to Earn CEUs

1. Attend at least 95% of the forum.
2. Additional instructions will be emailed to you after the forum.
  - You will be required to complete a session and post-program evaluation as well as a brief assessment with a passing score of 75% or greater.



The Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) is accredited by the International Accreditors for Continuing Education and Training (IACET) and offers IACET CEUs for its learning events that comply with the ANSI/IACET Continuing Education and Training Standard. IACET is recognized internationally as a standard development organization and accrediting body that promotes quality of continuing education and training.

# Learning Objectives

1. Identify the unique dynamics of Crisis Leadership
2. Consider the impacts of a suicide loss affecting workplaces and workforces
3. Define and outline the goals for a suicide postvention
4. Apply crisis communication recommendations to suicide postvention
5. Share insights on grief and bereavement

# QR Code to Request Resource Guide – 3 Articles



**SAFE Workplaces**

**Resources to Help Companies Respond to Critical Incidents, including Suicides and Overdoses**

A Free Resource From SAFE Project · [www.safeproject.us](http://www.safeproject.us)     



# 3 Downloadable Resources Articles via QR Code

BY BOB VANDEPOL & CAL BEYER

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT: The Critical Human Element



A new trend has also emerged: 2019 marked the seventh consecutive year of unintentional overdoses due to non-medical use of drugs or alcohol in the workplace in all industries (not exclusive to the construction industry).<sup>3</sup> This is similar for the 307 suicides that occurred in all workplaces.<sup>4</sup>

Construction risk management is a specialized body of knowledge, techniques, tools, and resources focused on the identification, planning, and implementation of controls to prevent unanticipated events from happening in the first place; or to prevent the total disruption of a contractor's operations should such an event occur.

In addition to their human toll, organizational crises are disruptive to both corporate business and project operations. Productivity, quality, risk, safety, profitability, and other key performance measures are adversely affected by such events.

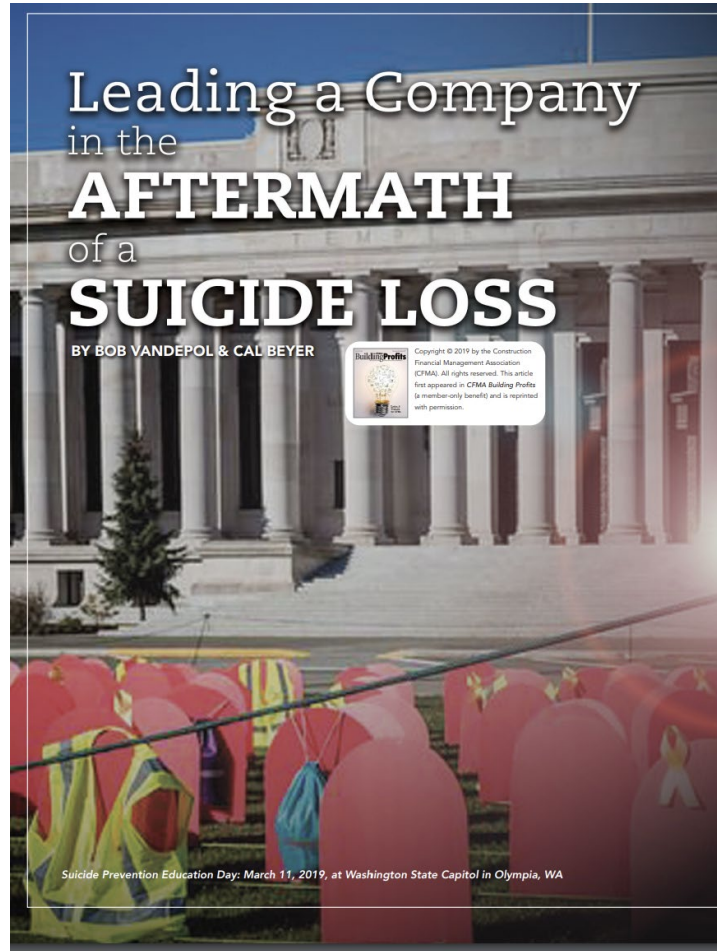
Almost 15 people die at work every day. Three of them are in the construction industry.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, since this article first appeared in 2009, the year-end numbers have remained virtually unchanged. Construction's increasing complexity demands that construction leaders (including CFMs) deploy new risk management strategies and tactics. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, unanticipated emergencies and disasters occur daily in our industry.

That is why risk management can be further defined as: "The conservation of an organization's human and financial resources."<sup>2</sup>

### A CRISIS DEFINED

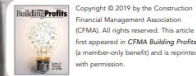
A crisis is the turning point in an unanticipated event – the point at which the outcome of an emergency or disaster turns either better or worse. Remember that during a crisis, it's more likely to be "business as unusual" rather than "business as usual."

May/June 2021 CFMA Building Profits



## Leading a Company in the AFTERMATH of a SUICIDE LOSS

BY BOB VANDEPOL & CAL BEYER



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Suicide Prevention Education Day: March 11, 2019, at Washington State Capitol in Olympia, WA

## Reversing Opioid Overdoses in Construction: A Jobsite Imperative

By Cal Beyer

In August 2023, the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) reported the first data highlighting substance overdose rates by occupation and industry level.

Construction and extraction had the highest rate among 22 major occupational groups at 162.6 per 100,000 workers. Likewise, construction was the leading industry group among 18 others at a rate of 130.9 per 100,000 workers. Additional elevated death rates were delineated for at least 17 specific construction occupations. The analysis concluded causal and contributing factors including high injury rates, opioid prescriptions for pain management, and no paid time off for sufficient injury recovery and rehabilitation.<sup>1</sup>

With the nation's overdose crisis now in its third decade, it continues to be driven by opioid misuse. Initially due to overprescribed medications, the crisis first shifted to heroin use with the advent of prescription drug monitoring initiatives at state and federal levels.<sup>2</sup> However, the emergence of illicitly manufactured synthetic opioids—especially fentanyl—starting in 2013 sharply increased the number of overdose deaths. As the opioid crisis continued to worsen in the U.S. (Exhibit 1), Indiana has been deployed over the past two decades by public safety and community-based harm reduction agencies to reverse overdoses.<sup>3</sup>



# Suicide and the Workplace

- Workplaces are impacted by suicides involving employees and family members of employees
- Workplaces can be impacted by suicides involving contacts at clients, professional business partners, labor unions, and vendors/suppliers
- Vast majority of suicides occur away from workplaces
  - Generally, approx. 225-300 suicides of the 50,000 annual suicides occur in the workplace

# Steps if Suicide Occurs in the Workplace

## 1. Immediately contact 911 to report

- Ensure perimeter protection to allow for privacy and confidentiality and preservation of evidence
- Allow emergency responders to conduct necessary investigations

## 2. Notify designated company crisis management leader

- Maintain confidentiality and privacy of information using care to not disclose until authorized to do so
- Suggest notification of insurance/risk management advisor for guidance and support
- Prepare to communicate with family or next of kin
- Prepare draft communication to employees and other stakeholders

## 3. Notification to OSHA may be required



# Definition of Postvention

*The psychological first aid, crisis intervention, and other support offered after a suicide to affected individuals or the workplace as a whole to alleviate possible negative effects of the event.*

# Purpose of Postvention

- 1. Contain the Crisis**
- 2. Reduce the Risk of Contagion**
- 3. Demonstrate Care & Compassion**
- 4. Provide Resources and Supports**
- 5. Establish “New Normal”**

# Reflection Question

- Identify someone who was there for you during a difficult time.
- What did they do right?
- What didn't they do?





## When All Eyes Are on You

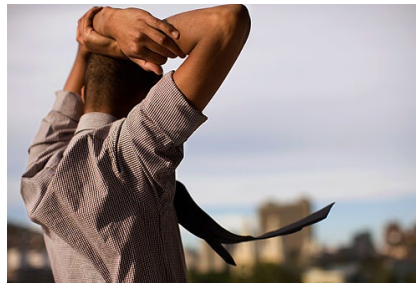
- High Impact
- High Visibility
- 60 Minutes (or You Know Who) shows up



## 4 C's of TRUST

- Competence
- Character
- Compassion
- Capacity
  - Trust my Leadership to have the resources





## You as Leader: What Do They Experience?

- Crises make you more of what you already were.
- Crises magnify small weaknesses.
- A strength over-used becomes a weakness.



# Pause and Reflect

When you think about your personal strengths as a leader in various situations, what dominant personal strength do you think you jump to when stressed?

Have you ever “rushed to your strength” in a way that it became a weakness?



# Crisis Responder Job Description



- Consult with the organization's leadership
- Position the organization's leadership favorably
- Let people talk if they wish to do so
- Identify normal reactions to an abnormal event so that people don't panic regarding their own reactions
- Build group support
- Outline self-help recovery strategies
- Brainstorm solutions to overcome immediate return-to-work and return-to-life obstacles
- Triage movement toward either immediate business-as-usual functioning or additional care

# Post Crisis Recovery Strategies to Boost Resiliency

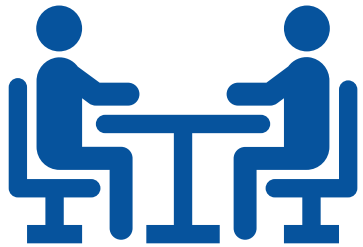


**Crisis Management: The Critical Human Element**

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and flush excess stress (“fight or flight”) hormones from your body.
- Avoid alcohol and sugary energy drinks.
- Stay connected and socialize. Do not isolate yourself.
- Eat – even if you’re not hungry. Staying nourished will help promote better rest.
- Try to maintain a normal sleep pattern. Take power naps as needed.
- Maintain physical activity and exercise patterns. Being physically active is good for your mental wellbeing.
- If needed, access help from your company’s EAP or behavioral health services (part of your health insurance benefits).

<https://cfma.org/articles/crisis-management-the-critical-human-element>

# Crisis Communication Process



## **A**CKNOWLEDGE

*and name the trauma*



## **C**OMMUNICATE

*Pertinent information with  
confidence and compassion*

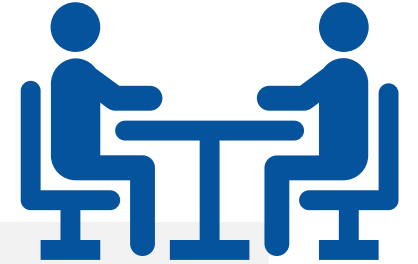


## **T**RANSITION

*To adaptive functioning and/or  
refer to additional care*

*(Crisis Care Network)*

# Acknowledge



- Acknowledge what has happened
- Deliver information with sensitivity
- Acknowledge the event's impact upon people
- Acknowledge the event's impact upon you
- Grant permission for a wide range of reactions
  
- Serves to:
  - Demonstrate leadership strength
  - Align the leader with those led
  - Establish a platform for cohesiveness

# Communicate



- Communicate both competence and compassion
- Visibly communicate care and concern for those involved
- Summarize what has happened. This is what we know at this time...
- Present objective and credible information. OK to read a script. Stick with it!
  
- Serves to:
  - Control rumors
  - Reduce anxiety, and
  - Return a sense of control to impacted individuals

# Transition



- Focus upon immediate next steps
- Provide information about coping – Emphasize resiliency.
- Triage back to adaptive functioning or to an appropriate level of care.
- Practical Assistance - determine basic and practical needs.
- Linkage with Collaborative Services - transition individual to appropriate level of support and provide information.
  - Church, counseling center, community resources, written communications and web resources, telephonic support via a 1-800 number, to continued personal assistance/ intervention.



## A MANAGER'S GUIDE TO SUICIDE POSTVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE



### 10 ACTION STEPS FOR DEALING WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A SUICIDE

BY  
THE WORKPLACE POSTVENTION TASK FORCE  
OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SUICIDOLOGY  
AND  
THE WORKPLACE TASK FORCE OF THE NATIONAL  
ACTION ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

In partnership with the Carson J. Spencer Foundation  
and Crisis Care Network

# 10 Action Steps for Dealing with the Aftermath of a Suicide

## IMMEDIATE: Acute Phase

- 1. Coordinate:** Contain the crisis.
- 2. Notify:** Protect and respect the privacy rights of the deceased employee and their loved ones during death notification.
- 3. Communicate:** Reduce the potential for contagion.
- 4. Support:** Offer practical assistance to family.

## SHORT-TERM: Recovery Phase

- 5. Link:** Identify and link impacted employees to additional support resources and refer those most affected to professional mental health services.
- 6. Comfort:** Support, comfort, and promote healthy grieving of the employees who have been impacted by the loss.
- 7. Restore:** Restore equilibrium and optimal functioning in the workplace.
- 8. Lead:** Build and sustain trust and confidence in organizational leadership.



Demonstrating leadership in times of crisis is always an opportunity to build trust, confidence, and workplace cohesiveness.

## LONGER-TERM: Reconstructing Phase

- 9. Honor:** Prepare for anniversary reactions and other milestone dates.
- 10. Sustain:** Transition postvention to suicide prevention.

# American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP.org)

- Healing Conversations Program Coordinators
- Support Groups for Survivors
- Out of the Darkness Walks



## Find a local chapter

With local programs and events in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, AFSP's chapters are at the forefront of suicide prevention. They create a culture that's smart about mental health through education and community programs, research and advocacy, and support for those affected by suicide. Find a local chapter in your community.

within



<https://afsp.org/find-a-local-chapter/>



**American  
Foundation  
for Suicide  
Prevention**



# AFSP Healing Conversations for Survivors of Suicide



## Healing Conversations

Personal support for suicide loss

Healing Conversations is a one-time visit (phone, virtual, in-person) that connects those who have lost a loved one to suicide with trained volunteers who are also survivors of suicide loss. The goal of this connection is to help recent survivors navigate this challenging journey by offering support, connection and resources.



**American  
Foundation  
*for* Suicide  
Prevention**

# Eluna Network – Grief Resources

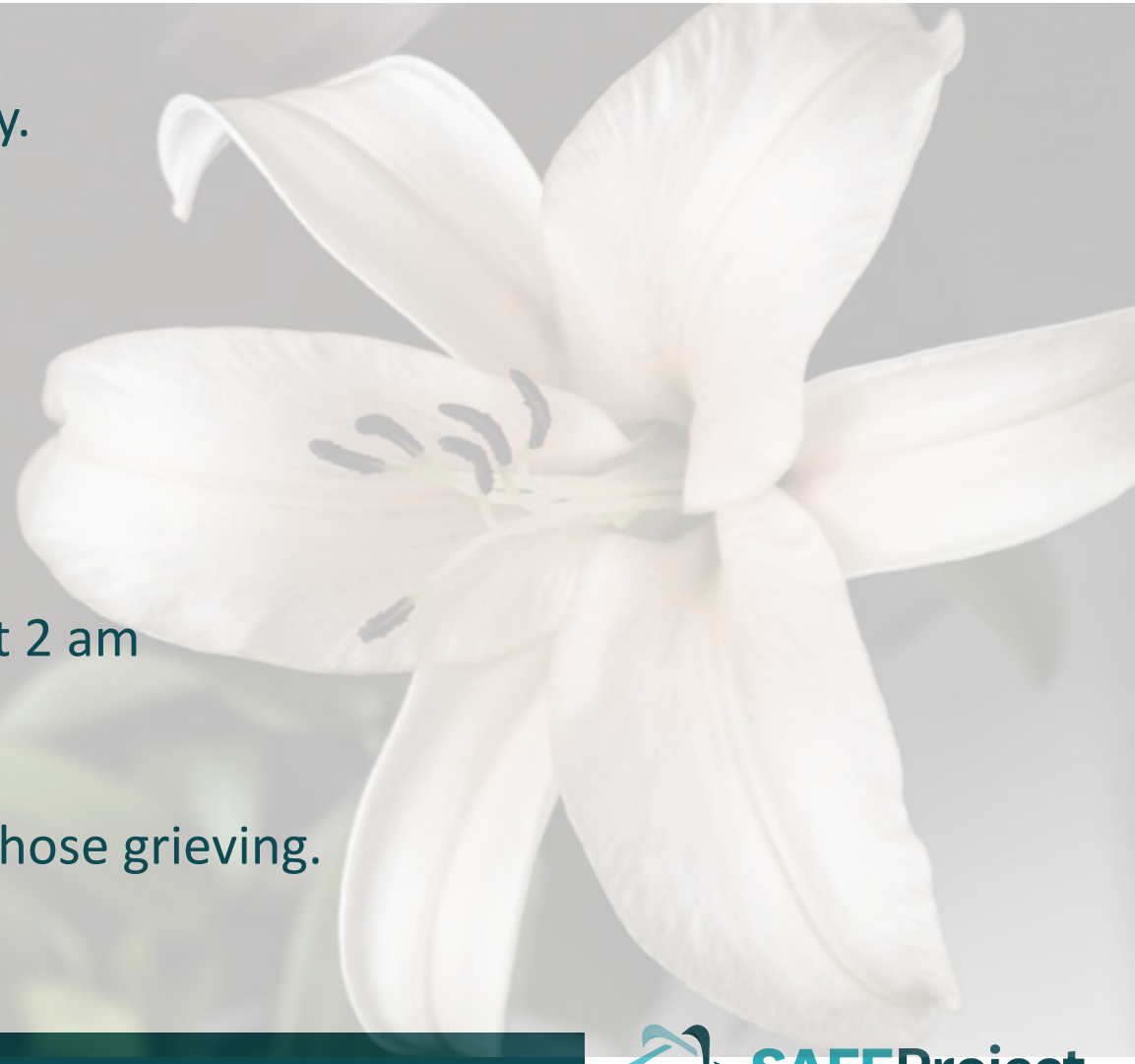
The Eluna Resource Center: <https://elunanetwork.org/resources>

Age-appropriate resources for children of all ages and young adults

eluna

# Grief Lessons Learned

1. Grief is a personal response. We all grieve differently.
2. Take time to grieve
3. Stay connected to friends and family
4. Do not shut-out support
5. Lean into whatever support is offered or available
6. Be the kind of friend who a friend in need can call at 2 am
7. If in doubt if someone is not ok, ask and ask again.
8. Periodically follow-up to check-in and check-up on those grieving.



# Bereavement Support Resources

- Clergy/Pastor/Chaplain
- Counselor/Therapist/Doctor
  
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or Union Member Assistance Program (MAP)
- Health Insurance Benefits or Union Health/Welfare Program
  
- Suicide Prevention & Crisis Lifeline (988)
- Crisis Text Line (*Text HELP to 741741*)
  
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP.org)
- Eluna Network

# How to Support Survivors of Suicide

- Don't ignore us or wait for a better time. *There won't be a better time.*
  - Get the awkward moment behind us so we can go forward together
- Don't worry about what to say --*just be present (with us)*
- Call our loved one by his/her name
- Share your favorite memories of our loved one
- Please come to the Wake/Memorial Service and celebrate the life of our loved one
- Please ask how we're doing when you bump into us
- It's ok to mail or drop-off a card
- Your kinds acts of service demonstrate your love to provide hope and promote healing



# Briefing: Suicide Postvention in the Construction Industry

AGC

SUICIDE POSTVENTION WEBINAR

JAN 16, 2025

DR. JOHN GAAL

# Why?

- 12 WEEKS / 8 CALLS
  - Late July to late Oct
- FULL DISCLOSURE
- FOCUS: FIRST 48

# What?

- RESEARCH PV MODELS
  - Military
  - Dentists
  - Veterinarians
  - 3 Phases
- DISCUSS FEASIBILITY W/ SMES
  - USA
  - Canada
  - England
  - Scotland
- DESIGN/DEVELOP/PILOT/LAUNCH SURVEY
- GATHER & ANALYZE DATA



# Who?

- INVITED 64 PARTICIPANTS
  - Construction Professionals
  - Healthcare Professionals
  - First Responders
  - Researchers
  - Peer Supporters
- 100% RETURN RATE
  - 2 Weeks
    - Late Nov- Early Dec 2024

# Data Snapshot

- DEMOGRAPHICS
  - 36% Female; 64% Male
  - 81% 40-69 yo
- GENERAL
  - ~16% Suicide Attempt Survivors; ~45% Suicide Loss Survivors
  - ~85% Lost a Family Member, Close Friend, or Co-worker
- SPECIFIC
  - 77% Construction Industry Focus on ST
  - 44% CI must take Immediate Steps
  - ~81% Identified Trained PS as Most Helpful Immediately Following Event

# Possible Next Steps

- 1-HOUR INTERVIEWS
  - Pioneers
  - Non-surveyed
- VISIT NEAR-SIMILAR PROGRAM(S)
- FOCUS GROUP
- DEVELOP TRAINING
- SEEK PEER SUPPORTERS

# Thank You

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