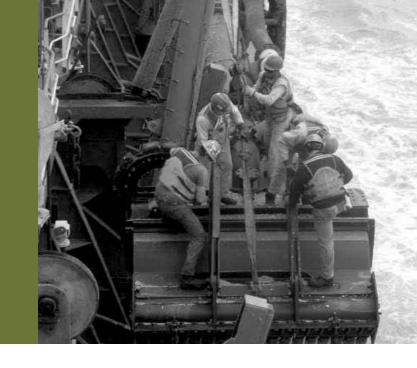# Hazard Within:
Getting a Grip on Mental Health in Dredging and Marine Construction

HILE GROUP

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When you think about <u>jobsite hazards</u>, physical risks probably top the list— an unprotected fall, being struck by an object, a man overboard, etc.
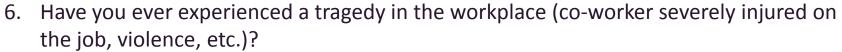
But what about the dangers you **<u>can't</u>** see?

Mental Health Self -Assessment

1. Have you had a personal experience (yourself) of a mental health problem including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, bipolar, schizophrenia, or any other type of issue?

2. Has a member of your family or close personal friend ever experienced a mental health problem?

3. Have you, a family member, or close friend ever had a substance abuse issue?

4. Has depression or anxiety ever prevented you, a friend, or family member from 'living your life'?

5. Have you ever experienced one of the most stressful life events including:

    - Death of a spouse (or child)

    - Divorce

    - Marriage

    - Imprisonment

    - Death of a close family member

    - Personal injury or illness

    - Marital separation

    - Dismissal from work

6. Have you ever experienced a tragedy in the workplace (co-worker severely injured on the job, violence, etc.)?

7. Do you know anyone who has attempted to commit suicide?

8. Have you ever worried about the mental health of a co-worker, family member, or close friend?

9. Do you know where to turn if you, a family member ,or close friend needed help?

Construction industry holds the staggering statistic for being **one of the top occupations at risk for suicide.**

But, we're not just talking about extreme cases of mental illness…

- 1 in 4 adults experience a mental health disorder in a given year

- 1 in 4 Americans say work is a source of anxiety

- Half of employees with anxiety admit that it interferes with co-worker relationships

- Only 1 in 4 employees with anxiety tell their employers

- The costs of mental issues is significant. Depression was the most expensive condition cited by numerous employers followed by obesity, arthritis, back or neck pain and anxiety.

- 4 of 5 workers report poor work-life balance

- 80% of workers who seek treatment see improvements!

Stats from World Health Organization (WHO)

Tough physical working conditions exacerbated by:

- Competitive, high-pressure work
- High prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse
- End-of-season layoffs
- Separation from family
- Tradition of "deal with it" cultures that valorize "toughness"
- Chronic pain from years of hard manual labor
- Sleep disruption due to rotating shifts

How often are the below qualities true of your projects?

- ✓ Personalities of machismo and fearlessness
- ✓ Self-medication through alcohol or substance abuse
- ✓ Isolation during solo work or on remote job sites
- ✓ Financial strain from unsteady seasonal or project-based employment
- ✓ Sleep disruption or sleep apnea
- ✓ Chronic pain from physical injury or cumulative wear and tear

- ✓ Undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions
- ✓ Strained marriages and family conflict
- ✓ Travel separating workers from families and friends
- ✓ Shame from a humiliating job failure
- ✓ Traumatic exposure to catastrophic injury or fatality
- ✓ Access to means of committing suicide like high places
- ✓ Pressure to finish projects

Signs of stress

Physical	Psychological	Behavioral
• Tiredness	• Anxiety	• Increased smoking and drinking
• Indigestion	• Tearfulness	• Withdrawal or aggression
• Headaches	• Low mood	• Lateness, absenteeism, presenteeism
• Changes in appetite	• Mood changes	• Recklessness
• Weight gain or loss	• Indecision	• Difficulty concentrating/ decreased productivity
• Joint and back pain	• Loss of motivation	
• Dizziness	• Increased sensitivity	
• A tight chest	• Low self-esteem	
	• Decreased problem-solving ability	
	• Increased overwhelming feelings	

How can you help?

Model of **Suicide Prevention Best Practices** for the Workplace

SCREENING

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES and resources

SUICIDE PREVENTION gatekeeper training

LIFE SKILLS and social networking promotion

GOAL: Promote Mental Health and Prevent Suicide

CRISIS MANAGEMENT policy and means restrictions

EDUCATION and advocacy

SOCIAL MARKETING

LEADERSHIP

Comprehensive Suicide Prevention Program – Adapted from Best Practice Air Force Model and the Jed Foundation. Source: Working Minds

So, what does that really look like?

- Break the stigma

- Increase the focus on personal safety and total worker health in addition to workplace safety

- Create an open dialogue, be aware of any changes in your coworkers and don't be afraid to speak up

- Get educated

- Expand collaboration and teamwork

- Ensure access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Take action with visible and vocal leadership

Resources

- **Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention**
www.preventconstructionsuicide.com

- **Mental Health America**
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

- **Center for Workplace Mental Health**
www.workplancementalhealth.org

- **Man Therapy:** *"Because you can't just rub some dirt on your emotions."*
www.mantherapy.org

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