



## Help Is One Call Away

**SOME ISSUES ARE IMPORTANT BUT TOUGH TO TALK ABOUT.** This month, I want to let you know about a significant step the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) has taken to shine a light on an issue that impacts members of the electrical construction industry and their families around the country. That issue is suicide.

NECA recently joined the Construction Industry Alliance for Suicide Prevention, an organization with the goal of providing and disseminating information and resources for suicide prevention and mental health promotion in construction. Construction is one of the top three industries at risk for suicide, according to the alliance, and it is an industry imperative to shatter the mental health stigma and create caring cultures within our companies.


According to a recent article in The New York Times, highlighted by the Construction Financial Management Association: between 1999 and 2014, there was a 22 percent increase in mortality among white, middle-aged men with less than a college education. Suicides, opioid overdoses and alcohol abuse were listed as the causes of this increased mortality. White, working-age men—the subpopulation most likely to die by suicide—dominate the U.S. construction workforce.

The known contributing factors for suicide and many aspects of working in construction create a perfect storm of risk. Those factors include the “tough guy” culture of fearlessness, stoicism and recklessness; the high-pressure environment of schedule, budget and quality performance with the potential for failure and resulting shame or humiliation; the prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse; the chronic pain from years of hard, physical and manual labor; and a higher occurrence seasonal employment and sometimes remote projects that can lead to fragmented communities and isolation. Research shows people with suicidal thoughts feel relief when someone asks after them in a caring way. Acknowledging and talking about suicide may reduce rather than increase suicidal thoughts.

As a member of the alliance, NECA will assist with the distribution of resources and information to our membership through quarterly email communications, newsletters, website promotion, webinars and other means at our disposal. In return, organizations such as NECA get the opportunity to continue to help shape the construction industry through the promotion of the safety and well-being of companies' most important assets—human capital.

Word is spreading quickly. Local and regional Suicide Prevention Summits have been scheduled in Charlotte, N.C., and Portland, Ore., and more are planned next year in Illinois and Michigan. Organizations and individual contractors can go to [http://pages.cfma.org/about\\_suicide\\_prevention](http://pages.cfma.org/about_suicide_prevention) for more information. There, you can find information on the alliance as well as resources, chapter tools and events.

I also want to offer a personal reminder for those in need: Help is always just one call away. Reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.TALK (8255). The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline's message for 2016's National Suicide Prevention Month and beyond (#BeThe1To) helps spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide. The Lifeline network and its partners are working to change the conversation from suicide to suicide prevention.

NECA wants to be a part of the solution, and I hope, by joining the alliance and sparking a conversation, we can assist in changing the dialogue around such a difficult subject. 

David A. Hardt, **PRESIDENT, NECA**