HAZARD ALERT

OPPIOID DEATHS IN CONSTRUCTION

Why are Construction Workers at Risk?

- The construction industry has one of the highest injury rates compared to other industries.
- Opioids are often prescribed to treat the pain caused by these injuries.
- Long-term opioid use can make people more sensitive to pain and decrease the opioid’s pain-reducing effects.

According to the CDC, 1 out of 4 people prescribed opioids for long-term pain become addicted.⁴

Injured Construction Workers Often...

- Cannot continue to work while injured.
- Suffer a loss in income. Even if an injured worker receives workers’ compensation, it is often not enough to make up for lost pay.
- Experience anxiety, stress, and depression, which can add to the pain.


Overdose Deaths are On the Rise.

- In 2016 alone, more than 63,000 people died in the U.S. from an overdose — over 42,000 of which involved an opioid, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- One study showed that more than half of those who died from an overdose had suffered at least one job-related injury.³
- Overall, overdose deaths that occurred on the job increased by 30% between 2015 and 2016.⁴
- In Ohio, for example, construction workers were 7 times more likely than other workers to die from an opioid overdose between 2010 and 2016.⁵

Protect Yourself!

1 Prevent Injuries

Work shouldn’t hurt — your employer must provide a safe workplace to prevent an injury from occurring. A commitment to safety reduces the risk for injury and need for pain medication. Follow safe work practices.

2 Talk to a Doctor

Opioids are addictive and can have side effects.

Ask about:

- Other forms of pain medication that are not addictive and have fewer side effects.
- Other forms of pain management such as physical therapy or acupuncture.

Opioids should be the last option to treat your pain. If opioids are prescribed they should be used for the shortest possible time. Safely dispose of any unused medications.

3 Get Help

Opioids change how your brain works. They trigger one part of your brain to take more and change another part that makes it hard to resist.⁶ Check with your employer or find out if they have a program to help, such as:

- an employee assistance program (EAP), or
- a member assistance program (MAP).

Or ask your doctor for help to find the best addiction treatment option for you.

Remember addiction is an illness that can be treated. Call this confidential national hotline:

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

If you or someone you know needs help:

- Contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at https://www.ofrehousing.org/ to find your confidential national hotline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357).
- Visit Facing Addiction’s online Addiction Resource: https://facingaddiction.org/.
- Contact your union.
- Find a list of common opioids at https://npi.org/common-opioids.

Find out more about construction hazards. To receive copies of this hazard alert and cards on other topics, call 301-578-8500

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