



INCLUSION, SAFETY AND TEAMWORK

Veterans Toolbox Talk – Part 2

Date: _____ Jobsite: _____ Discussion Leader: _____

HOW INCLUSION AFFECTS SAFETY

Construction work depends on teamwork. When people feel ignored, disrespected, or left out, they get distracted. Distractions on a jobsite can lead to injuries—or worse. When teams trust each other, communicate clearly, and look out for one another, everyone is safer and more likely to go home at the end of the day.

Mental health is a serious issue in both the military and construction.

- In 2022 (the most recent year with complete data), over **6,400 veterans** died by suicide.¹
- Nearly **6,000 construction workers** died by suicide the same year.²

Common reasons include:

- Feeling isolated
- Fear of asking for help
- Stigma around mental health
- Substance misuse

Feeling included and supported at work helps reduce these risks.

STRENGTHS VETERANS BRING TO THE TEAM

Veterans bring skills and habits that strengthen crews and improve safety, including:

- **Loyalty** – Committed to their team and the job.
- **Teachable** – Used to training and learning new skills.
- **Know How to Follow** – Understand rules, safety plans, and directions.
- **Know How to Lead** – Can step up when the team needs guidance.
- **Disciplined** – Show up prepared, focused, and ready to work.
- **Adaptable** – Adjust when plans change or challenges come up.

Military life is very structured. Civilian life for many veterans can feel less predictable. That adjustment can be hard for many, but when veterans are supported they bring strong teamwork and reliability to the jobsite.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does feeling included (or excluded) affect communication and safety on our jobsite?
2. What can we do to make sure everyone is comfortable speaking up about safety concerns or asking for help?

¹ Office of Suicide Prevention, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2024, December). 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-1-of-2_508.pdf

² The Center for Construction Research & Training (CPWR). (2025, August 7). Resources to Prevent Suicide Deaths in Construction. <https://www.cpwr.com/research/research-to-practice-r2p/r2p-library/other-resources-for-stakeholders/mental-health-addiction/suicide-prevention-resources/>