



May 2, 2023

Mr. Douglas L. Parker  
Occupational Safety & Health Administration  
200 Constitution Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Douglas,

When we contemplate the dangers of construction, we usually consider slips, trips and falls among the biggest risk factors. While this is true, there is another considerable risk to construction industry workers that often presents itself as an invisible danger: mental health disorders. Devastatingly, more construction workers die annually from suicide than every other workplace-related fatality combined, making suicide rates in construction the second highest of any United States industry group, per the CDC.

As we evaluate our industry-wide safety standards and commitments this Construction Safety Week, we must also use this time to shed light on the mental health crisis happening across our industry. Construction workers operate at a crossroads of multiple suicide risk factors, including high psychological stress levels, emotional exhaustion, a widely accepted culture of self-reliance, physically demanding work leading to chronic pain, and elevated usage of non-prescription opioids and alcohol. In addition, more than fifteen percent of veterans enter the construction industry after completing their service. Veterans have a fifty percent higher rate of suicide than the general population, making veterans in construction a particularly vulnerable group.

Our collective goal as an industry should be for every worker to return home safely to their families each day. It is our job as industry leaders to train, support and educate our workers on the symptoms of mental illness and identifying suicide risk factors, which should be taken as seriously as any jobsite risk. The time is now to rally our entire industry to address this dire issue. OSHA plays a critical role in setting and defining key areas of focus for safety in our industry. As such, we ask OSHA to include suicide awareness and prevention training as a core requirement in the OSHA 10 and OSHA 30 curricula.

At Suffolk we're always striving to go above and beyond when it comes to safety and our approach to mental illness in construction is no different. This Safety Week, we are hosting a Mental Health Fireside Chat during which clinicians Dr. Louis Chow, Senior Director at Home Base and Dr. Joe Grasso, Senior Director at Lyra Health will educate our employees on mental health issues, substance use disorders and suicide prevention efforts in the construction industry. This event will be opened by our National Chief Operating Officer Tim Stroud and moderated by Laura Lakin, veteran and Assistant Project Manager at Suffolk. Suffolk will also host several webinars to train employees about our mental health resources, building new skills to notice and respond to mental health issues, and adopting strategies to help navigate day-to-day stress.

Similarly, at Home Base, we acutely understand the important role proper training, education, and mental health treatment can have in suicide prevention. As the first and largest private sector clinic in America devoted to providing lifesaving clinical care and mental health support for veterans, Home Base has served more than 30,000 veterans and their families and trained more than 85,000 clinicians throughout the country. Home Base provides world-class, direct clinical care, wellness, education and research to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of conditions such as posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, substance use disorders and related conditions.

Despite our existing efforts in this space, we believe this is an area where the entire industry can and should come together to help bring about change and our belief is that OSHA can play a critical role in driving that discussion.



Together within our construction industry, and with the help of experts like OSHA, we must prioritize fostering a widespread culture of support and transparency regarding mental health. We believe that with increased training, awareness and resources, we can create a safer and more supportive environment for every worker operating in our industry.

Thank you for your continued leadership and collaboration on this matter. We stand ready to work with you to help address this important topic.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John F. Fish".

John F. Fish  
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer  
Suffolk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Hammond".

Brigadier General (Ret.) Jack Hammond  
Executive Director  
Home Base