

HAZARD ALERT



OPIOID DEATHS IN CONSTRUCTION



Why are construction workers at risk?

- ▶ The construction industry has one of the highest injury rates compared to other industries.¹
- ▶ 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.²

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.

*Source: The Demolition of Workers' Comp. <https://www.propublica.org/article/the-demolition-of-workers-compensation>



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.



Getting help lifting heavy materials can reduce the risk for injury.

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.



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3 Get Help

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

- ▶ an employee assistance program (EAP); or
- ▶ 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.samhsa.gov/> or call their confidential national hotline: **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**.
- ▶ Contact your union.
- ▶ Visit CPWR's opioid resource page to find a "Physicians' Alert on Pain Management for Construction Workers" and more: <https://cpwr.com/research/opioid-resources>



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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Sources: 1) CPWR, The Construction Chart Book, 2018, Chart 38e. 2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Promoting Safer and More Effective Pain Management. https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/Guidelines_Factsheet-Patients-a.pdf 3) Cheng et al. Comparison of Opioid-Related Deaths by Work-Related Injury, American Journal of Industrial Medicine 56:308-316, 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23143851> 4) Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, News Release, 2016. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cfoi.n0.htm> 5) Opioid overdose deaths: Which jobs are at risk? http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2017/11/opioid_overdose_deaths_which_jobs.html 6) National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, Out of Control: Opioids and the Brain, 2018. <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/out-control-opioids-and-brain>