

In the United States, a majority, 60% of suicides are committed with a firearm, followed by suffocation, poisoning, and other means<sup>1</sup>. **Limiting Access to Lethal Means** means removing weapons, prescriptions, poisons, or other means that someone might use during a moment of crisis to die by suicide.

*Lethal means are put into two categories:*

**Violent methods** can include firearms, cutting or piercing with a sharp object, hanging, jumping from high places, or stepping in front of a train or other vehicle.

**Nonviolent methods** include ingestion of pesticides, poison by gases, suffocation, and overdose. (2)

When someone is in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, they may have a plan to obtain something to facilitate their intention to end their life. While suicide is preventable, it cannot be predicted. Suicides can be planned or impulsive, which is why it is critical to disrupt, remove, or delay access to lethal means.

When we disrupt, remove or delay access to lethal means, we provide hope and give the person time to get to the resources that can help them through the crisis and stay alive.

Remember that if you are faced with someone in a crisis, it is important to stay with that person until help arrives. You are not a counselor or a first responder, but you are an agent of hope.

### Some tips that may help in a time of crisis.

1. **Talk about it and have a plan.** This should be part of everyone's home and job emergency planning. "If someone in our household or at our site is experiencing a mental health crisis or has expressed thought of suicide, we will..."
2. **Create an environment where this conversation can happen.** It is important that people feel comfortable saying that they are having an issue and that they are praised for their self-awareness.
3. **Lock up guns, change the code to the gun safe, remove the guns from the home.** You may be able to turn them into an agency that will hold them for you temporarily. Find out what your local resources and options are and have conversations about gun safety.
4. **Lock up or remove medications, chemicals, and fuel sources.** These can cause harm if ingested. Make sure you have the poison control number posted.
5. **Remove any tools or instruments that can be used for cutting.** Take away car keys, cords, ropes, even plastic bags.

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## ***Reducing Access to Lethal Means Page 2t***

We can apply the principles of reducing access to lethal means to the job site, too. Take a look at your site, think about what lethal means are available, and how to reduce access to them.

1. **Leading edges.** These can be secured with netting, tall guard rail systems, and lockable gates to that area.
2. **Wrap the building.** Restrict access to open areas. Security guards can deter people from gaining access to the site
3. **Lock up tools, chemicals, and fuel, and do not leave them unattended.**
4. **Secure the tower crane.** Use security hatches and anticlimbing deterrents.
5. **Post Suicide Prevention signs and crisis line numbers** throughout the job site. This makes it easier for people in crisis to call and reach out for help.
6. **Review procedures.** Have a plan for dealing with a crisis moment on the job. Who do you call, how do you respond, what are your resources?

By being proactive and fostering a culture that openly discusses mental well-being and sharing resources, you will be more effective in helping people in their time of need. When people are in crisis it is essential they know there are alternatives to suicide and there are resources and people waiting to help.

Although this may seem overwhelming, the one thing to remember is to get the person in crisis away from the things that could hurt them and connect them to the resources that will help them. Time equals hope and hope equals life. Disarm the plan and save a life.

**National Crisis Line # 1-800-273-TALK**

**National Text HELLO to 741741. Every person is connected with a crisis counselor, who is trained to listen and offer sound advice.**

References:

1. **National Institute of Mental Health**, <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/suicide>
2. **Atrain Education** <https://www.etrainceu.com/content/7-lethal-means-0#:~:text=Lethal%20means%20are%20items%20or,categories%3A%20violent%20and%20non-violent%20methods> (1)