

Health Impacts of Alcohol

A Construction Suicide Prevention Partnership Toolbox Talk *

www.suicide-stops-here.org

Military culture includes alcohol, so does civilian culture. Alcohol can be cunning and baffling when it becomes a problem. Now is a good time to take a step back and consider how much alcohol plays a role in our lives. Service members (including National Guard & Reserves) and Veterans may be at increased risk for developing problems with alcohol – called Alcohol Use Disorder, a medical diagnosis. Just like other medical issues, treatment and help are available.

People who work in construction are more likely to drink alcohol excessively, use substances, and have mental health problems. That's in part because of the nature of the work we do. We often have irregular work hours, frequent travel away from friends and family, and physical injury.

All of these contribute to the high rate of suicide in the construction industry. In fact, men who work in construction die by suicide more than any other occupation. **Review how alcohol impacts your life and whether you would like support to cut back or stop drinking.**

We are not asking people to quit drinking, but instead to start a conversation about alcohol and how it affects our daily lives.

Drinking Definitions

What is a standard drink?

Beer: 12 fl. oz.
Wine: 5 fl. oz.
Liquor: 1.5 fl. oz.



What is heavy drinking?

Having more than 1-2 drinks every night for a week



What is binge drinking?

Consuming 4-5 or more drinks on a single occasion



The construction community is not alone in excessive drinking. In Oregon, 1 out of 5 adults drinks excessively. Many people drink excessively and may not realize it. Excessive alcohol use can cause physical harms such as increasing the risk for cancer, liver failure and heart disease. When we are injured, drinking can slow our recovery. In construction, we are also at higher risk for injury or death when one of us comes to work hungover or under the influence of alcohol.

Signs of an Alcohol Problem

- Not being able to quit drinking or control how much you drink
- Needing to drink more to feel the same effects as before
- Feeling sick to your stomach, sweaty, shaky, or anxious when you stop drinking
- Spending a lot of time drinking and recovering from drinking
- Giving up other activities so you can drink
- Trying to quit drinking or cut back, but not being able to
- Continuing to drink even though drinking causes you problems
- Trying to hide your drinking from others
- Having "blackouts," where you don't remember what happened while drinking
- Having friends and family be concerned about your drinking

* VA's Make The Connection.net What is alcohol use disorder? Treatment, symptoms & Veteran support (maketheconnection.net)

Here is where you can go for support....

- Call the Oregon Drug & Alcohol Helpline today. You can reach the helpline 24/7/365 by dialing 800-923-4357.
- Text: If you prefer texting, you can send the keyword RecoveryNow to 839863
- Reach out to someone you know who is sober and in recovery, ask to talk with them.
- Contact your medical provider and ask for help, various medications and counseling programs are available.
- Call the Portland VA Substance Use Treatment Program at: 503-220-8262, extension 31841 and ask for the Substance Use Treatment Program or call your VA provider.
- Attend a peer support recovery meeting such as
 - Alcoholics Anonymous
 - The only requirement is a desire to stop drinking.
 - Visit PDXAA.org or call 503-223-8569
 - Smart Recovery
 - Visit SmartRecovery.org
 - Al-Anon Family Groups for people impacted by someone else's drinking
 - Visit Al-AnonPortlandOregon.org
 - Some construction sites offer peer support groups.