

Burnout

Self Awareness

Why we need to talk about this:

- The long-term consequences are truly alarming.
- Most people in the construction industry realize that a typical workday is far from ordinary. They are aware of the challenges, but it's when these conditions exceed expectations that burnout becomes a real threat.

What is Burnout?

Burnout is defined as “emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and the reduction of personal accomplishments caused by chronic work stress.” [3] This means you're beyond feeling drained and worn out, you're emotionally and physically numb, feeling robotic or automated on top of feeling like you're not getting anywhere. It's important to note that exhaustion does not mean tired. Tired means you need rest; exhaustion means the weight has become too much to carry, like a toolbelt or vest filled beyond capacity.

Burnout doesn't happen overnight. It sneaks in through the stress of being under pressure all the time, having conflicts with colleagues and overcommitting oneself to the neglect of one's own needs. In some situations, it can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts. At first it just feels like stress, a bad week, or a rough patch. But over time burnout chips away at motivation, energy, and even identity. So how can you tell when normal job stress has turned into something more serious?

Signs You Maybe Missing

One of the biggest warning signs is the disruption of sleep. Whether it's struggling to fall asleep, waking up multiple times during the night, or constantly feeling unrested, sleep issues are often the first red flag that something is wrong. Lack of sleep doesn't just leave you tired—it disrupts appetite, mood, and even how you communicate with others. But sleep issues are often just the beginning.

The Reality

In 2021, the CDC analyzed the suicide data from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) it identified the suicide rate for construction workers to be 56.0 (male); 10.4 (female) per 100,000, [1] nearly double the national average for men. In 2021, 1.3 million Canadians were employed in the construction industry. [2]

[1] [Suicide stats](#)

[2] [Labour shortage hampering construction](#)

[3] [Frontiers | Is it Time to Consider the “Burnout Syndrome” A Distinct Illness?](#)

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Burnout

As exhaustion builds, it doesn't just affect how you feel—it also changes how you interact with others. Have you noticed someone becoming more distant, withdrawn, or unusually negative? Burnout can make communication feel exhausting, leading to frustration or even concerns about behaviour. These changes often go unnoticed, but they're key signs that someone may be struggling.

What can you do?

Focusing on sleep hygiene can make a dramatic difference. Long hours can limit how much sleep you get, but improving sleep quality can make a big difference. Simple changes—like cutting out caffeine after 2 PM and establishing an evening routine to signal your body it's time to wind down—can help. Something as small as being tech-free by 8 PM and adjusting the temperature can improve sleep. Another helpful practice for operators is implementing a consistent stretching routine, which can relieve tension and improve overall well-being.

Acknowledge the issue, stress is part of the job, but there's a difference between manageable pressure and burnout. Recognizing when stress crosses the line is key to taking action before it becomes overwhelming.

Work to stay connected to support and activities. Being away from family and support systems takes a toll on mental health. Schedule regular check-ins—whether through video calls, group chats, or even quick voice messages—to maintain those vital connections.

When to seek help

When the struggles are on the inside it can be challenging to justify getting connected to professional help, but the reality is if you had a broken leg you would see a doctor. If your sleep has been affected for three or more times a week for three months or longer, consider seeking help. Asking for help is hard, but you are not alone—there are people trained to listen and support you through what you're going through.

Self Awareness

Resources:

Heads Up Guys

headsupguys.org

Free Counselling
Society of Canada

[www.freecounselling
canada.ca](https://www.freecounsellingcanada.ca)

Pay What You Can
Peer Support

[www.paywhatyoucan
peersupport.com](https://www.paywhatyoucanpeersupport.com)

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