

Workplace Wellbeing Hub

Toolbox Talk: Destigmatizing Mental Health in the Workplace

Duration: 5 minutes

Audience: Field crews, supervisors, trades, operators, shift workers

Purpose: Normalize conversations about mental health, reduce stigma and improve help-seeking

Many workers experience stress, exhaustion, or personal challenges that can affect their mental health, yet stigma often keeps people silent even when they need support. Stigma occurs when individuals feel ashamed or afraid of being judged, and it can prevent workers from speaking up about problems that are affecting their wellbeing, focus, or safety on the job.

Just like fatigue, dehydration, or physical strain, mental strain can interfere with our ability to work safely. Long hours, production pressure, family issues, financial worries, or lack of sleep can affect concentration, mood, or reaction time. Normalizing conversations about mental health helps ensure concerns are addressed before they contribute to incidents or injuries.

A simple way to reduce stigma is by recognizing that mental health challenges are common and treatable. Most people will experience stress, anxiety, or low mood at some point in their lives. Speaking up early is a sign of responsibility, not weakness. Checking in on a coworker who seems “off,” withdrawn, unusually irritable, or distracted can make a meaningful difference. You do not have to diagnose a problem, just noticing changes and asking, “Are you doing okay today?” is enough to start a conversation.

Our workplace offers an Employee Assistance Program, onsite support, and mental health benefits that can connect workers with confidential help. Using these resources early can prevent problems from escalating and supports a safer, healthier team.

Reducing stigma begins with simple everyday actions such as noticing changes in yourself or co-workers, treating mental health like any other health concern, and remembering that support is available and confidential.

Quick crew activity (1 minute)

Ask the group:

“What’s one thing you do outside of work that helps you handle stress?”

Share personal strategies or tips to get the group started.

Safety reminder:

Mental strain affects judgment, focus and decision-making. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, distracted, or exhausted, pause and reach out – just like you would for any other safety concern