

**Workplace violence is defined as any threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening and disruptive behavior that occurs at the worksite. These interactions can occur in the construction and transportation industry between employees and members of the public. Employees may encounter an individual experiencing a mental health issue while they are working along a roadside or on a bridge, purely as a result of circumstance,**



Construction/Transportation employees are not equipped or expected to directly intervene in these situations; rather, this safety talk is intended to provide simple and practical instructions for employees who may encounter a situation that requires more specialized assistance.

The following safety tips should be utilized when employees encounter a person who may be experiencing a mental health crisis or engaging in self-harm.

1. Observe the Situation: Ask yourself, is the person....
  - Exhibiting behaviors that seem out of place?
  - Highly emotional?
  - Acting erratically or threatening to harm themselves or others?
  - In a location that seems out of place or the location has had previous incidents often involved in suicide attempts (bridges, highway intersections)?
2. Call 911 and report your observations:
  - State the facts
  - Identify what you see and hear: Is the person holding a weapon? Is the person talking to themselves, yelling, or speaking incoherently?
  - Describe any noticeable physical injuries (from a distance)
  - Follow the instructions of the 911 operator
  - Stay on the phone with the 911 operator until appropriate trained professionals arrive (EMS/Crisis Workers/Police/Fire-rescue).
3. If directed to approach the individual by 911 Operator:
  - Assess the scene. Only approach the individual if the scene is safe. If you feel it is not safe, wait for trained professionals to arrive.
  - Assess your skill level. If you feel you are unable to provide additional assistance, wait for first responders to arrive.
4. If it is safe and you feel comfortable intervening:
  - Approach the person slowly. Place the phone on speaker mode so that the 911 operator can hear what is going on around you and so that they may provide additional guidance if necessary.
  - Keep your hands in plain sight and keep your palms up and facing the individual in distress. This shows the person you are not a threat.
  - Maintain a calm clear voice and speak slowly.
  - Ask open ended questions. Try to learn some general information from the person, including:
    - ✓ First name

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Where they are from
- ✓ How they are feeling
- ✓ If they are having thoughts of hurting themselves
- ✓ If they are taking mental health medications
- ✓ If they are currently being treated by a Mental Health Professional
- ✓ If there is someone, they want you to contact

*These questions will allow the 911 operator to pass on additional useful information to the professionals so that they may address the situation as soon as they arrive to the scene.*

5. Once trained professionals arrive:

- Inform the person that additional help has arrived
- Thank them for talking with you
- Tell the 911 operator that help is on scene and ask them if it is ok to end the call
- Provide any information to police or other trained professionals at the scene
- Report the incident to your immediate supervisor
- Reach to a trained Mental Health professional to complete a critical stress debriefing either through local community mental health services, your employers Employee Assistance Program or the State Employee Assistance Program for Commonwealth employees. This will ensure that you have not been affected by the highly stressful and volatile situation.

**We hope that by reviewing this information, employees know the appropriate steps to take when encountering an individual experiencing a crisis situation on a roadway or public access area where highway construction and maintenance work activities may occur.**