

The Mental Health Crisis

How NECA is Engaging

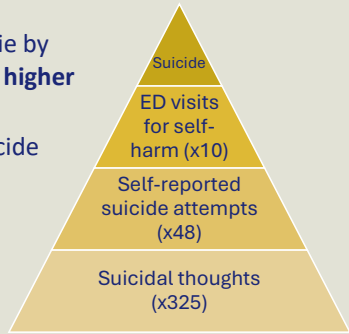
Mike Starnier
Outside Line Safety
& Industry Engagement

What is the scope of suicide?

- In the US, ~**46/100,000** male construction workers die by suicide each year (~**2x the national average** and ~**5x higher than the rate of workplace fatalities**).
- For every death by suicide, there are many more suicide attempts and thoughts of suicide.

All of this takes a toll.

- Loss and grief
- Injuries, health impact
- Emotional trauma and risk of additional suicide risk
- Engagement, safety, and productivity
- Economic cost



About Suicide in the Construction Industry; DataBulletin-September2024.pdf; and Facts About Suicide | Suicide Prevention | CDC

What about mental health?

- At least monthly:
 - ~**30%** of workers reported feeling anxious
 - ~**9%** felt depressed
- Most (~**84%**) did not seek help; few (~**5%**) sought professional help
 - Top barriers to seeking help:
 - Stigma related to mental health
 - Fear of job loss
 - Distrust of mental health providers
 - Limited access to care during job hours

What is the economic cost of suicide?

- The economic cost of suicide and nonfatal self-harm in the US averaged **\$510 billion/year** (2020 USD), the majority from life years lost to suicide¹.
 - Working-aged adults (aged 25-64 years) comprised nearly **75%** of the average annual economic cost of suicide. Costs include associated medical spending, lost work productivity, reduced quality of life from injury morbidity, and avoidable mortality based on the value of statistical life.

1: Economic Cost of U.S. Suicide and Nonfatal Self-Harm



What influences suicide risk in this industry?

Risk Factors

Injury, chronic pain, self-medication

High-stress, high-demand work environments

Job insecurity and precarious employment

Cultural norms (masculinity, stoicism) and mental health stigma

Isolation and disrupted social support

Access to lethal means



What influences suicide risk in this industry?

Protective Factors

Access to healthcare (including insurance coverage)

Existing safety culture infrastructure

Track record of industry-wide culture change

Capacity for rapid skill uptake

Ability to reframe cultural norms

Natural helpers and role models

Strong peer and crew cohesion + union and association networks

High engagement in team-based problem-solving



About the CIASP

- Born out of necessity in response to a statistic released in a **CDC study ranking construction and extraction as the #1 occupation for deaths by suicide**
- **CIASP** was formed in 2018 as a **501(c)(3) nonprofit organization**
- **Vision:** A zero-suicide construction industry
- **Mission:** CIASP exists to save lives by eliminating suicide in the construction industry.
- **10-Year Goal:** The construction industry suicide rate will be no higher than the average of all other industries: approximately 18 deaths per 100K employees.




If you're thinking about suicide, call or text 9-8-8 anytime for 24/7 crisis support. Text HELLO to 741741 to connect with a counselor.

KNOW THE FACTS ▾ RESOURCES ▾ TAKE ACTION ▾ MEDIA & NEWS ▾ CONTACT US ▾ DONATE NOW


TOOLBOX TALKS VIDEOS NEEDS ANALYSIS PATHWAY MODEL SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER VETERANS WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION UNDERSERVED GROUPS

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT




Prevention
These resources focus on building protective factors into the workplace that help employers address risk factors and recognize warning signs.

EXPLORE NOW



Intervention
These resources focus on recognizing warning signs to reduce the likelihood that an employee attempts or dies by suicide.

EXPLORE NOW



Postvention
These resources outline crisis response, proper communication and ways to reduce the risk of suicide contagion/clusters.

EXPLORE NOW

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Making a Difference

- Opioid Deaths have decreased the past in recent years
- Suicides in Construction have also seen a decrease

Number of Opioid Overdoses in Construction

Year	Number of Deaths
2022	17,056
2023	15,910
2024	11,325

6.7% Decrease (2022-2023)
28.8% Decrease (2023-2024)

Number of Suicide Deaths in Construction

Year	Number of Deaths
2022	5,237
2023	5,095
2024	5,008

2.7% Decrease (2022-2023)
1.7% Decrease (2023-2024)

Includes workers aged 16 to 64. Calculations by CPWR's Data Center using the National Center for Health Statistics 2022-2024 Mortality Cause File.

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CONSTRUCTION WORKING MINDS

Mental Health Promotion, Suicide Prevention and Addiction Recovery at Work

www.ConstructionWorkingMinds.org

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5TH ANNUAL CONSTRUCTION MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING CONFERENCE

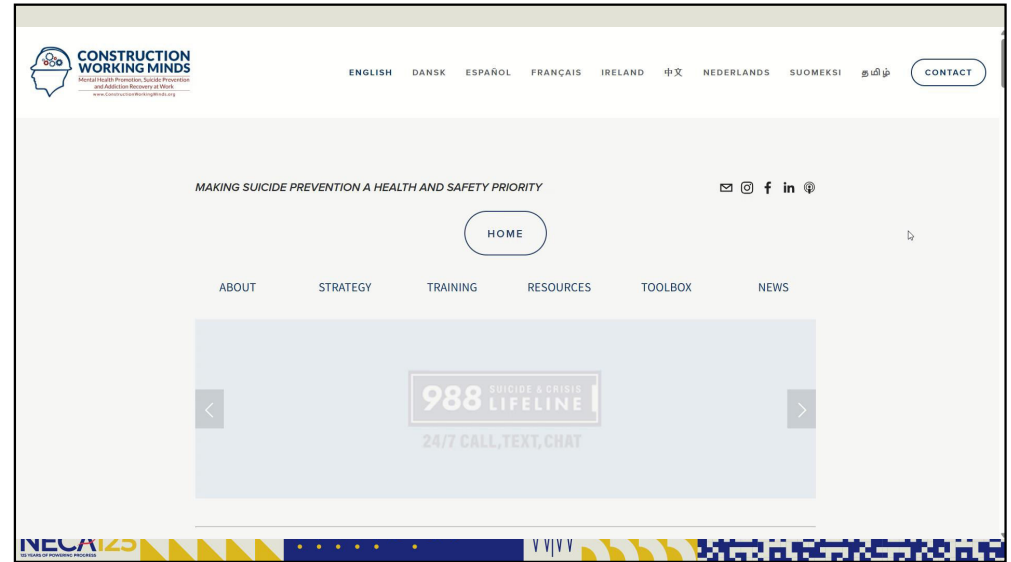
SAVE THE DATE

FEBRUARY 23-26, 2026

Moving from Surviving to Thriving

PORTLAND, OR

NECA125



VitalCog TRAIN-THE-TRAINER CERTIFICATION COURSE:

How to Build Capacity in Your Organization: Offer a T-t-T Certification Course

- *Construction Specific Suicide Prevention Training*
- The 8-hour train-the-trainer certification course certifies participants with the credentials/trainer tools to deliver the VitalCog training at your organization and in the community.
- This course can be delivered virtually or in person.

About VitalCog Training

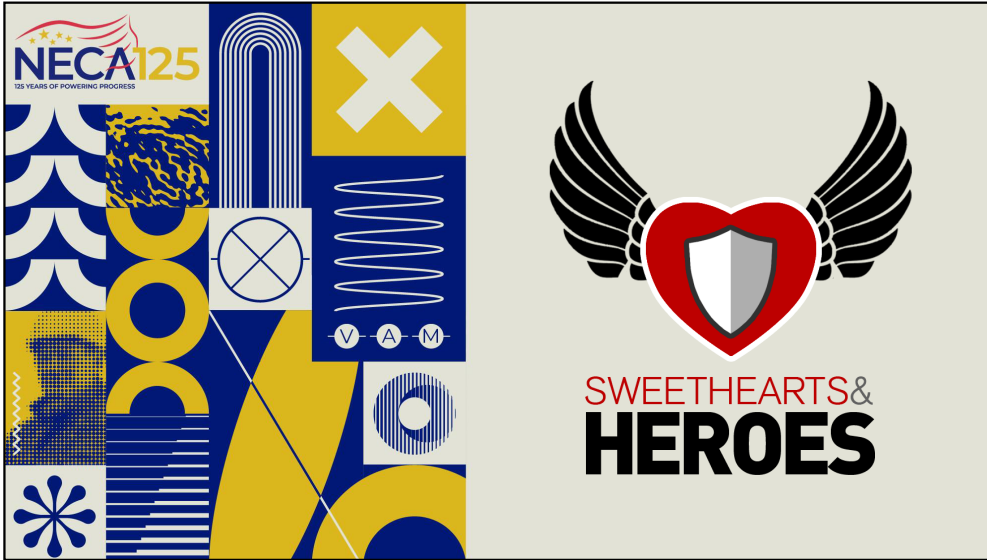
- The VitalCog training gives participants the skills and tools to appreciate the critical need for suicide prevention in the construction workplace while creating a forum for dialogue and critical thinking about workplace mental health challenges and suicide prevention, and by promoting help-seeking and help-giving.

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125 YEARS OF POSITIVE PROGRESS

VitalCog TRAIN-THE-TRAINER CERTIFICATION COURSE:

- **Morning**
 - Introductions and Orientation
 - Fundamental Knowledge about Suicide Prevention in Construction
 - 15-minute BREAK
 - A 90-minute run-through of "VitalCog" with Workbook
- **Afternoon**
 - "Train-the-Trainer" Overview and Review of Toolkit
 - Participants Prepare and Practice Delivering VitalCog training.
 - Expectations of Trainers
 - Celebration!

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125 YEARS OF POSITIVE PROGRESS



TAKING CARE OF THE 5TH WIRE

Every line has its wires, just like every crew has it's members.

In this industry, **safety from personal injury is number one.**

But there's one "wire" we've left out of the equation.

It's the wire within each of us...

We call it the **5th wire.**

substack

READ THE ARTICLE >>> **THE 5TH WIRE**



OUR PROGRAM START IGNITION

Our work begins with an **electrifying 90-120 minute keynote event** where we establish the **War on Hopelessness** and how we solve this issue.

This event will jumpstart your organization's awareness around the destructive decisions being made in the trades, as well as introduce you to our FLASH Circle system built around human connection.

You'll also receive this message in digital format with our foundational **5th Wire HOPE Series** assets to integrate into your existing LMS, along with a yearlong subscription to our **5th Wire Online Platform** to introduce this message to future employees.

Watch our Sizzle Reel!

PLAY

APPRENTICE vs JOURNEYMAN

Our **apprentice program** focuses on **establishing the habit and system of Round Table Circle discussions**. This is the foundation for changing the culture and the next evolution of the journeyman. Our goal is to **create the linemen of the future** who are 5-10 years away from running the job, leading the crew, and shaping the culture.

Our **journeyman program** focuses on running **FLASH Circles & finding the gatekeepers** within your organization by going into the field and working with your contractors. Here, we'll also **work through real-life situations** that involve things like leadership, life and character skills, and personal challenges such as parenting, spousal and family relationships, and so forth.

- Apprentice Program
- Journeyman Program
- Management Training

Cultural Change

OUR APPRENTICE PROGRAM

After ignition, our apprentice program follows the following process:

PHASE 1

6-to-8-Month "Round Table" Program (1-to-2-hour, community-building Circles once a month) + Identifying Trainer and Apprentice "Gatekeepers"

PHASE 2

Immediately after the "Round Table" Program, Instructors and/or Apprentice "Gatekeepers" are trained in FLASH Circle and/or Round Table Circle Facilitation (enabling them to run Circle)

PHASE 3

During the remainder of an apprenticeship, every training or class day should begin with a FLASH Circle + Recommend "Gatekeepers," those trained in Circle, and any others interested, join a Round Table Circle with newer apprentices or each other periodically

PHASE 4

Instructors and/or Apprentice "Gatekeepers" with 20+ facilitated Circles to attend a Train the Trainer Circle Facilitation Training, enabling them to train future Apprentices, Instructors, and/or Contractors in Circle Facilitation, and become administrators of Phase 1

All apprentices who top out and complete Phase 4, we highly encourage them to return regularly to the Union Hall and participate and/or facilitate Round Table Circles with new apprentices

OUR JOURNEYMAN PROGRAM

After ignition, our journeyman program follows the following process:

PHASE 1

After Ignition, we highly recommend a 6-to-8-Month "Round Table" Program (1-to-2-hour, community-building Circles once a month) — this can be facilitated by S&H or facilitators from the Union Hall who have undergone Circle Training

PHASE 1A

Depending on where you want to go, we recommend training your GFs, Safety Professionals, and Journeyman "Gatekeepers" in FLASH Circle and/or Round Table Circle Facilitation

PHASE 2

After training, we highly recommend at minimum a weekly FLASH Circle tied to your safety briefings, with an additional recommendation of a monthly or quarterly Round Table Circle

PHASE 3

For GFs, "Gatekeepers," and Safety Professionals with 20+ facilitated Circles, we recommend having them attend a Train the Trainer Circle Facilitation Training at the Union Hall to perpetuate the practice of Circle inside your company independently

The 5th Wire Platform will include online training courses and additional resources to help improve the skills of Circle Facilitators and provide key human discussions tied to safety concepts for sustained practice

TRAIN THE TRAINER

We also offer a **Train-the-Trainer Circle Training** that goes beyond the mere "nuts and bolts" of the Circle process. With this training, we'll certify an elite group of your safety and leadership staff to train future foremen, management, and gatekeepers in how to run our Round Table & FLASH Circles.

Trained facilitators must facilitate a minimum of 20+ sessions before this training.

Usually completed 6 months after the initial Circle Training.

This will make you fully autonomous without our continued support.

WHO WE ARE WORKING WITH

Logos displayed include: NECA ALASKA CHAPTER LOCAL 1547, IBEW LOCAL 1547, ip UTILITY SAFETY CONFERENCE & EXPO, IBEW Third District, OAC, SELCAT, IBEW LOCAL 103, ALASKA IBEW LOCAL 1541, IBEW LOCAL 1249, O'CONNELL ELECTRIC COMPANY, WALKER TREE CARE INC, LOCAL 51 • SCRANTON, PA, LOCAL 42 IBEW, NECA, RICHARDSON & SONS, IBEW LOCAL 1319, and allan briteway electrical utility contractors, inc.

NECA 125 35 YEARS OF POWERING PROGRESS

MATES NORTH AMERICA PILOT

QUANTA

Elements of the MATES North America Pilot model

- MATES INDUCED** **General Awareness Talk** Introduces all workers to the nature of the problem, that it's ok to talk about mental health, and provides practical guidance for how they can support themselves and others.
- MATES CONNECTOR** **Connector Training (LivingWorks)** For volunteers on site to be more alert to someone thinking of suicide, know how to keep them safe in a crisis, and be able to connect them with further help.
- MATES ASIST** **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)** (LivingWorks) Teaches people to recognise when someone is considering suicide, apply suicide first-aid intervention to increase immediate safety, and link to further help.
- Case Management and referral support** Workers can access case management support, and if required are connected to appropriate external support.
- Field Officers and volunteer Connectors** MATES is built on peer support - interventions are delivered by peers who are culturally credible and respected within the workforce.

Learn more here: [How MATES Works](#), [The Frontline of MATES](#), [Webinar](#), and [Podcast](#)

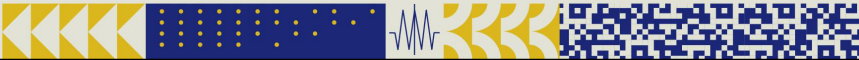
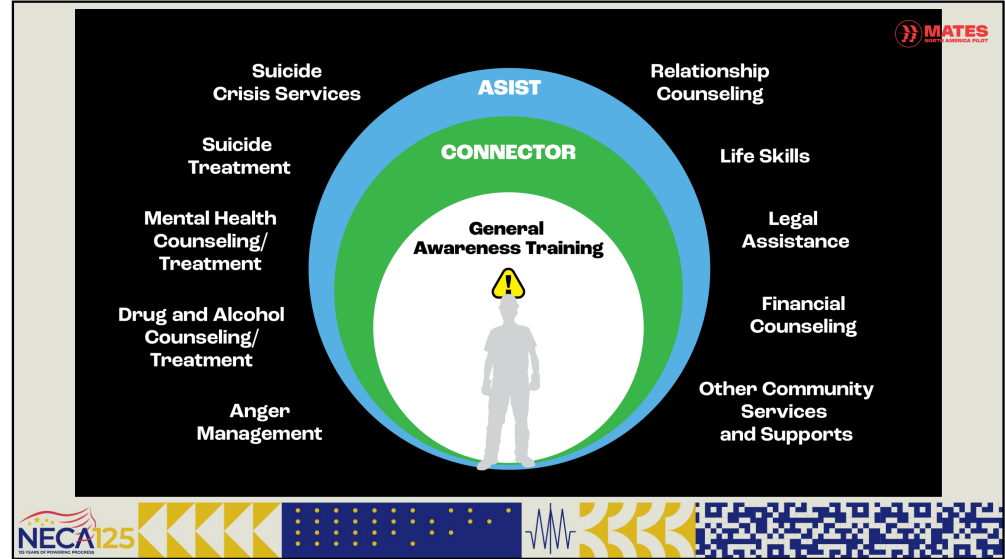
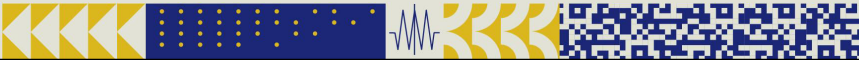
MATES in Construction Suicide Prevention Program

- Was developed by/for the construction industry in Queensland, Australia in 2008
 - Supported by labor, management, unions, safety bodies, and others from the industry
- Has since been scaled and sustained
 - Spread across Australia; went to New Zealand in 2019; being pilot-tested in North America
- Emphasizes shared responsibility, collective action, and peer delivery and support ("mates helping mates")
- Is available to anyone on site, regardless of employment status or role
- Helps align mental health with safety culture
- Is evidence-based and a world's best practice



MATES in Construction Suicide Prevention Program

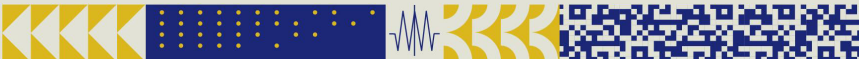
- Begins with site engagement
 - Builds the relationships, readiness, and program delivery plan needed for successful program delivery
- Then builds awareness and capacity
 - Includes multi-leveled, phased training delivered on site and ongoing coaching and support by Field Officers who come from the industry
 - Impacts mental health literacy and stigma, help-offering, help-seeking, peer support, culture change
- Provides case management for workers thinking about, or at risk of, suicide
 - Includes connection to Case Managers who help workers navigate options for professional services
 - Improves access to and use of those services (e.g. suicide crisis services or long-term suicide treatment; mental health, substance use, or relationship counseling; financial counseling)
- Provides postvention support if a suicide occurs



Program Outcomes

- Increased workforce awareness about suicide and its prevention
- Improved mental health and suicide prevention literacy
- Increased workforce capacity to engage in peer support and be part of a network of safety
- More help being offered by peers to workers—and being sought by workers from peers—when someone is thinking about suicide or at risk of suicide
- More workers accessing peer-based and professional supports
- Reduced mental health stigma
- Positive impact on workplace culture, presenteeism, and productivity
- Reductions in suicide attempts and deaths
- Economic benefits/ROI

Learn more here: [MATES Research](#)



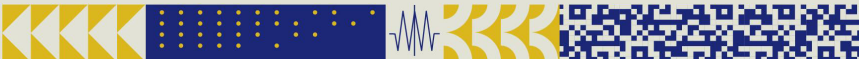
MATES North America Pilot

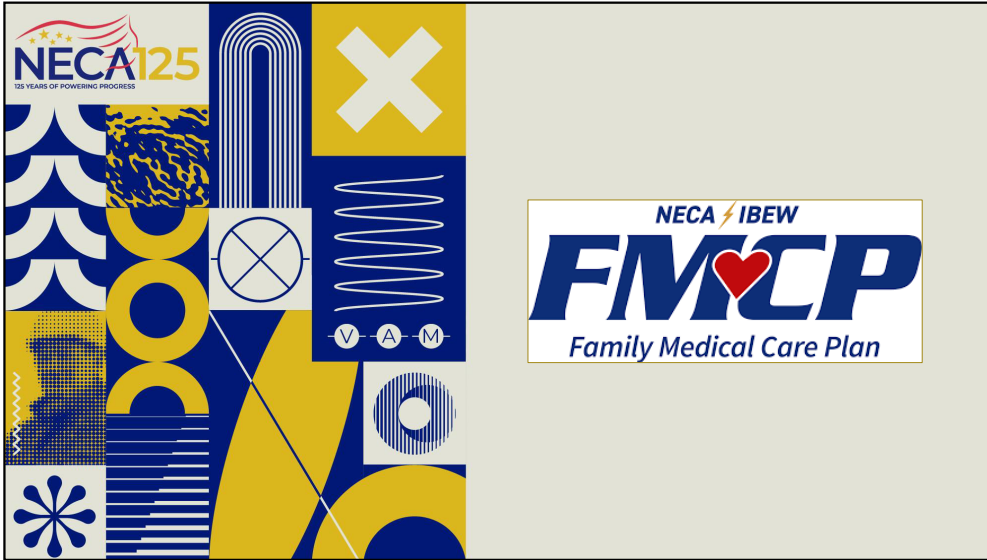
- Need to test the program in a new setting and context
 - 12 months of program delivery and evaluation beginning in March 2026
 - Six sites diverse in setting, project size and scope, workforce, trades, unions, and other variables
 - Adaptations informed by implementation science, evidence scan, and input from industry advisors and workers in the field
 - Vision to scale and roll out the program after the pilot
 - Learn more and follow along: www.matesna.org and social media (“MATES North America Pilot”)
- NECA’s Involvement**

 - MATES North America Industry Advisory Group
 - Mike Starner and Wes Wheeler
 - Input on key aspects of pilot preparation (e.g. workforce model, branding, communications, program content)
 - Industry support and visibility
 - Funding: Southeastern Line Construction Chapter



“A common aspirational goal in the safety culture is ‘Zero Incidents.’ Yet, when many people consider ZERO SUICIDES as a goal, they are met with doubt that it could ever be so. What if we believed it were possible and did everything in our power to get there?”
—Construction Working Minds





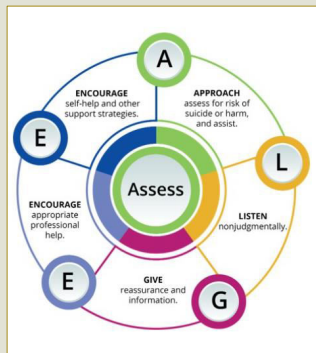
"Last week, I had the privilege of attending a Mental Health First Aid class at **IBEW Local 47**; a powerful partnership between Local 47, Union Care Solutions and **Southern California Edison (SCE)** focused on tackling mental health in our trade.

The class was led by **Jennifer Lavin CCISM** and **Jacqueline L.**, and I can honestly say it was one of the most informative and meaningful trainings I've attended. I walked away feeling better prepared to have some of the hard conversations, both at home and at work, and with a clearer understanding of the resources available to our members through Local 47."

- Clayton Loback, Construction Superintendent



FMCP Mental Health First Aid Training



NECA IBEW
FMCP
Family Medical Care Plan

Visit these resources to learn more. Each link will open in a new tab.

- [FMCP Resources](#)
- [NAMI Resources/Hotline](#)
- [Substance Use Support](#)
- [Veterans Resources](#)
- [Warmlines](#)



Mental Health FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR MENTAL WELLBEING



Select the course that's right for you

Adult MHFA courses teach adults how to help fellow adults. Youth MHFA courses teach adults how to help youth aged 12-18.

These courses are available in three formats:

- Fully in person
- Partly in person (called Blended In-person)
- Fully virtual (called Blended Virtual)

The location for Blended Virtual courses will appear as "N/A." They can be taken from anywhere in the United States with an internet connection.

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NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

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EMAIL SIGN UP

Deadline Approaching for Recognition of Safety Achievement Program

Deadline: March 6, 2026



NECA's Recognition of Safety Achievement program is an elite safety recognition focused on recognizing thriving companies that excel in multiple areas of their safety and health programs.

[More Information on the Program](#) →

Apply Here


UP NEXT: 2026 Legislative Conference ... →

Topics

NECA Meetings

- Associate Executives Institute (AEI)
- NECA Safety Professionals Conference (NSPC)
- NECA Convention
- NECA Safety Professionals Institute (NSPI)
- District & Chapter Meetings

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Q&A

