



SAFETY SHARE

WHAT HAPPENED?

An employee approached his supervisor and asked if he could speak to him in private. The employee seemed nervous and unsure of what to say. The supervisor took the employee for a walk so they could have some privacy. The supervisor noticed that the employee was nervous and asked how he can help and what was going on. The employee nervously said that he was having thoughts of committing suicide on the work site. The employee noted that the only reason why he came to the supervisor with this issue is that a few days earlier the supervisor, in the morning tool box meeting, let the employees know that if anyone was dealing with depression or just needed to talk that it was ok for anyone to come and talk with him. The supervisor would listen to them to see if there was anything that he could help with.

WHAT DID/COULD HAVE WENT WRONG?

The supervisor was caught off guard by this and didn't have a plan as to what to do. This was new for the supervisor and he never had to deal with this issue before. The supervisor thinking that he was doing the right thing, told the employee that if he wanted to take the rest of the day off. The employee went and gathered his tools and some other items to get ready to go home. In the meantime the supervisor went and let the superintendent of the job site know of the situation. The superintendent was also caught off guard and he was also unsure of what to do. As the supervisor and the superintendent were discussing this situation, the employee's brother came around the corner. The employee's brother also worked on the same site. They told the brother about what was going on, he then immediately asked where his brother was. Just as the employee was driving off site the brother stopped the car and went home with him. The employee never did try to commit suicide and received counselling for his issues.

KEY LESSON FROM INCIDENT

Although the supervisor mentioned mental health in a safety meeting, there was no real training for the supervisor and his superiors as to what to do with an employee that has these thoughts. There was no plan put in place to really deal with this issue.

Some of the key lesson that have been taken from this issue:

1. **Communicate with your workers**, talk about the subjects even if they are uncomfortable. The only reason that the employee came to the supervisor with this was the fact that the supervisor talked about it in a safety meeting. He threw out a life line to his workers. That simple mention of this gave that employee enough confidence to go and talk with the supervisor about his thoughts.
2. **Have a plan**, if the supervisor and his superintendent had a plan in place to deal with an employee that have had these thoughts, they would have made much better decisions. They would have not let the employee go home by himself. The employee would have been under supervision until the proper help came.
3. **Training**, this is a hard situation to deal with. If the supervisor had some tools in his tool box to deal with this he would be able to deal with this issue in a much more informed manner. Give your supervisors some sort of mental health training. You never know when a situation like this can come up.