



MCA
DETROIT

Mechanical Contractors Association of Detroit

36200 Schoolcraft Rd. • Livonia, MI 48150

• **HEALTH AND SAFETY DIVISION •**

(313) 341-7661, ext. 204
safety@mcadetroit.org
www.mcadetroit.org/safety



TOOLBOX TALK: BURNOUT

Duration: 10–12 minutes

1. Why We're Talking About Burnout

In the trades, we're used to pushing through:

- Long hours
- Tight deadlines
- Physically demanding work
- High expectations

Burnout happens when stress becomes **constant instead of temporary**. It doesn't mean someone is weak—it means their system is overloaded. Burnout affects **safety, morale, and performance**, which is why we address it just like any other hazard.

2. What Is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of **physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion** caused by prolonged stress. It builds slowly and often goes unnoticed at first.

Burnout can feel like:

- Being drained even after rest
- Feeling detached from work
- Losing pride or motivation
- Feeling like nothing you do is enough

3. Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

Mental & Emotional

- Irritability or short temper
- Feeling overwhelmed or helpless
- Trouble concentrating
- Loss of motivation

Physical

- Constant fatigue
- Headaches or muscle tension
- Poor sleep
- Frequent illness

On the Job

- More mistakes
- Slower reaction time
- Increased absenteeism
- Withdrawing from the crew

4. Why Burnout Is a Safety Issue

Burnout affects:

- Decision making
- Awareness
- Reaction time
- Risk-taking behavior

A burned-out worker is more likely to:

- Miss hazards
- Take shortcuts
- Get injured
- Or put others at risk

5. What Helps Prevent Burnout

- Take real breaks when available
- Hydrate and eat regularly
- Get consistent sleep
- Use time off when possible
- Talk early—don't wait until you hit the wall

6. Looking Out for Each Other

- Check in on coworkers who seem "off"
- Watch for major behavior changes
- Encourage rest and support
- Speak up if someone looks unsafe due to exhaustion

7. Key Takeaways

- Burnout is real and common in high-demand work
- It affects safety just like fatigue and stress
- Early action prevents bigger problems
- Looking out for each other saves injuries and careers