



MCA
DETROIT

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Toolbox Talk: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Duration: 10–12 minutes

Why We're Talking About This Today

As the days get shorter and the weather gets colder, many people start to feel different—more tired, less motivated, or just “off.” For some people, this shift is more than just winter blues. It’s a real type of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD.

In construction and the trades, we already deal with early starts in the dark, long shifts, cold weather, and high physical demands. All of these can increase the risk for SAD. This affects safety, focus, mood, and performance—making it important for all of us.

What Is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern, usually starting in late fall or winter and improving in spring and summer.

It’s not a weakness. It’s not “just being lazy.” It’s a real medical condition linked to changes in sunlight, sleep cycles, and brain chemistry.

Common Signs and Symptoms to Watch For

Emotional & Mental: feeling down or hopeless, loss of interest in activities, irritability, trouble concentrating.

Physical: low energy, sleeping more than usual, cravings for carbs or sugar, weight gain.

Work-Related: zoning out, more mistakes, absenteeism, isolation, short temper.

Why This Matters for Safety

Mental health impacts jobsite safety just like fatigue or dehydration. SAD can slow reaction time, reduce awareness, and increase risky behavior.

What Helps Prevent or Reduce SAD

- Get Sunlight: get outside whenever possible.
- Stay Active: physical movement boosts mood.
- Stick to a Sleep Routine.
- Eat to Fuel Your Body.
- Talk About It early.

How to Look Out for Your Crew

Check in on coworkers. Listen without judgment. Encourage support. Get help immediately if someone is at risk.

Resources & Support

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline – Call or text 988

Employee Assistance Program (Local 636 & Local 98 – Ulliance)

Primary care or mental health provider

Key Takeaways

- SAD is real and common.
- It affects safety and well-being.
- Looking out for one another matters.
- Asking for help is strength.