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The Human Side of Operations

Thursday, November 5, 2025

- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. ET
- 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 p.m. CT
- 9:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m. MT
- 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. PT

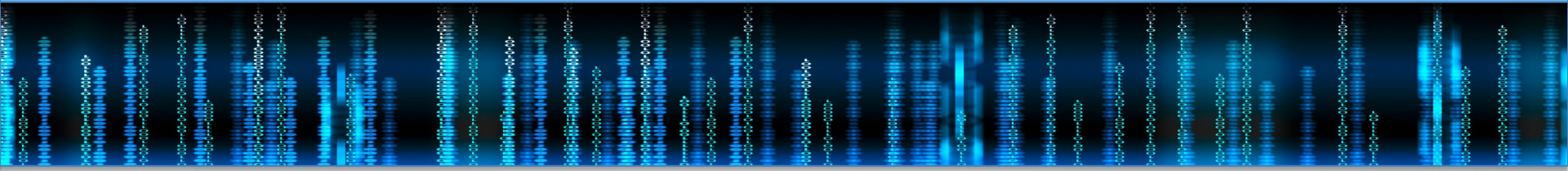
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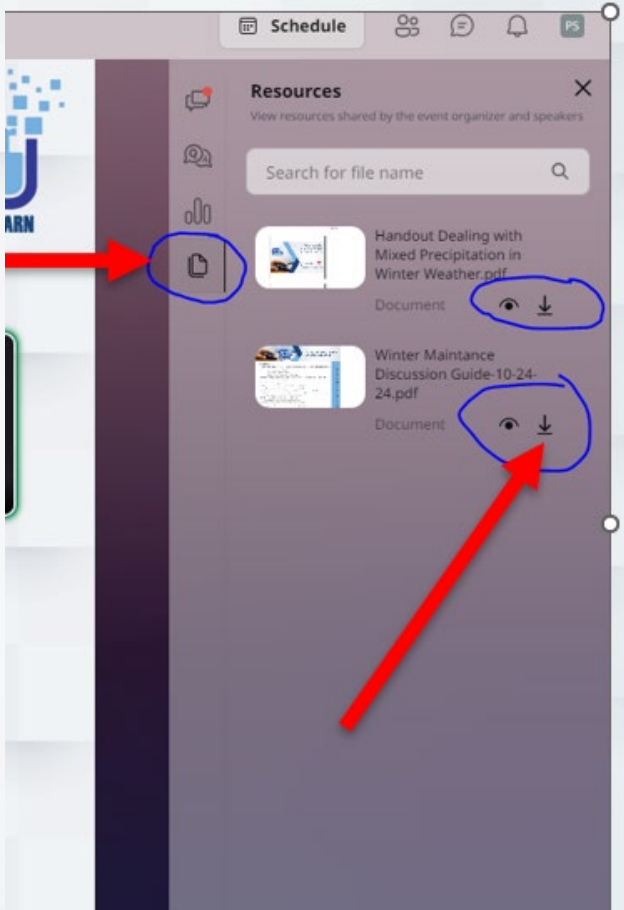
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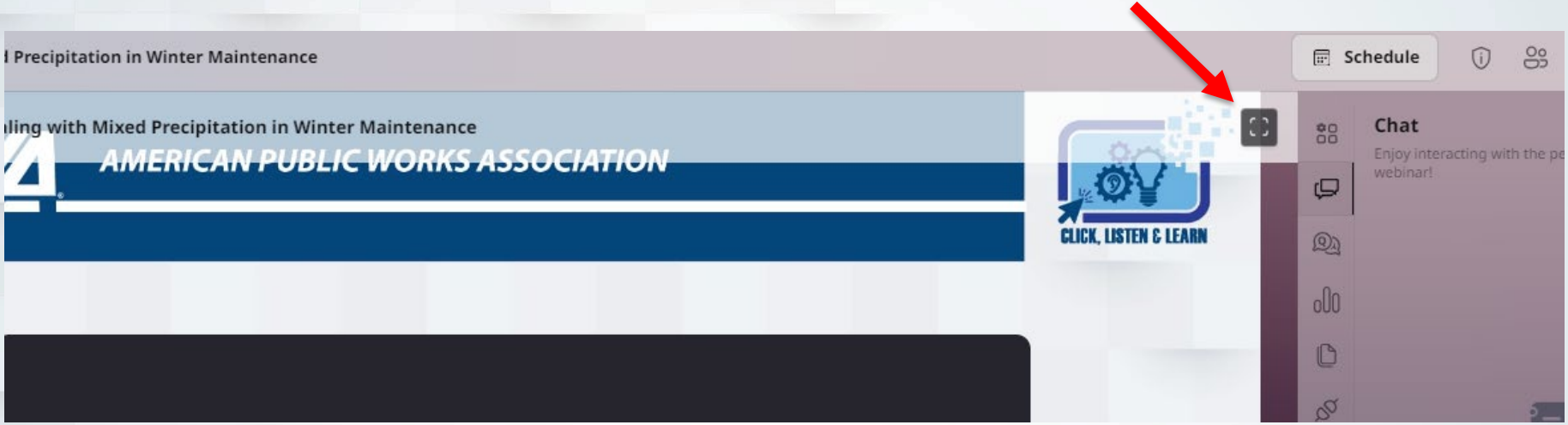
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www.apwa.org/resources/resource-center.

Handout for Today's Program can be download from the right-hand chat panel.



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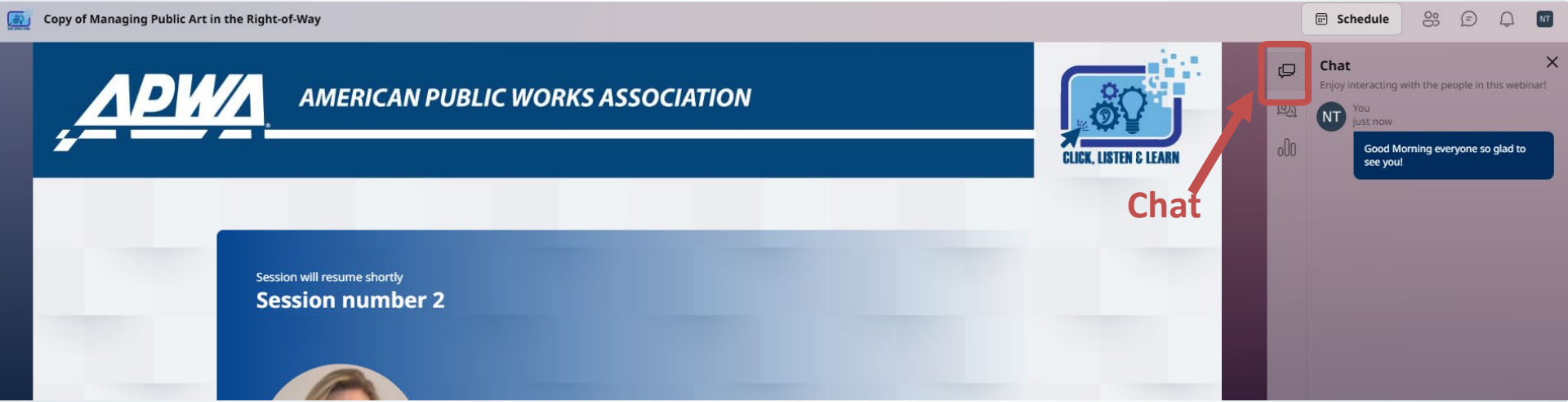
Viewing the Presentation



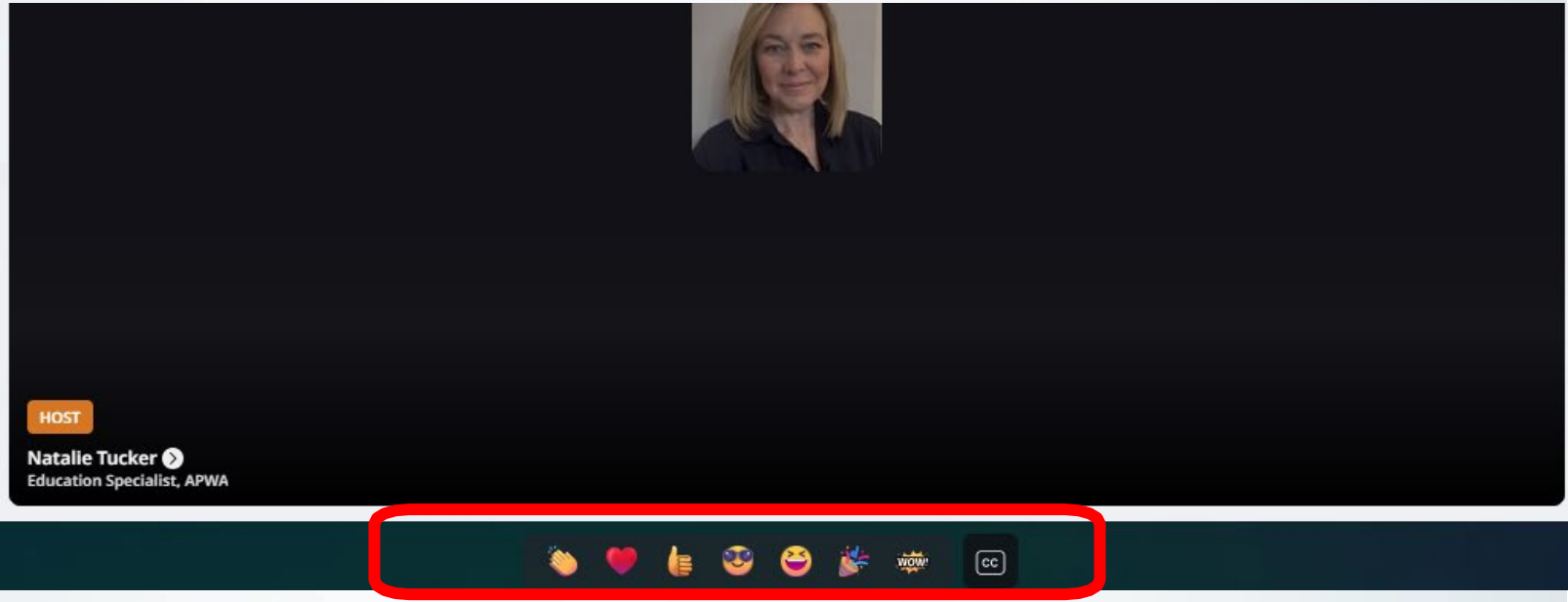
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Communication & Engagement Opportunities



Reactions



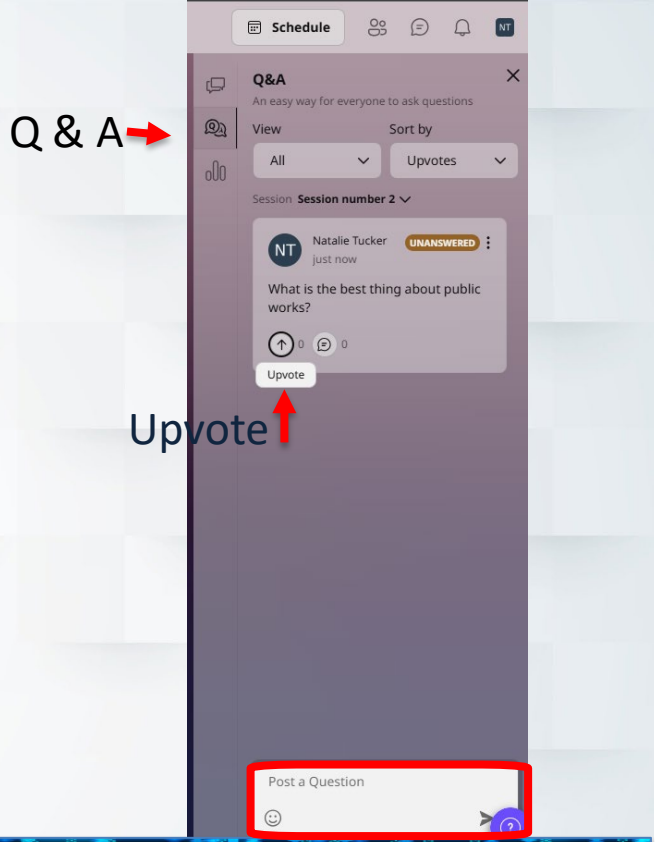
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Program Questions

1. If you have questions for our speakers, you may ask them using the Q&A feature.

2. Choose to Upvote a question that is the same as your question.



Today's Moderator:



Scott Tourville

Administrator

Columbus Department of Public Service

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Learning Objectives

After completing this course, participants will be better able to:

- Recognize how personal crises and life stressors can affect employee focus, safety, reliability, and performance in public works operations and maintenance environments.
- Apply strategies for balancing empathy, accountability, and operational continuity when responding to team members experiencing personal or family challenges.
- Identify appropriate internal partnerships and support resources, including HR, to help leaders respond effectively to workforce challenges while maintaining safe and reliable operations.



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Get Involved with APWA

Nominations to join an APWA knowledge team or subcommittee are considered year-round. Share your interest via the QR code below.

Today's Speakers



Karly Greene
Maintenance and Operations Manager
Charlotte County Public Works



Dawn Shorter
Training and Accreditation Officer
City of North Port, Florida



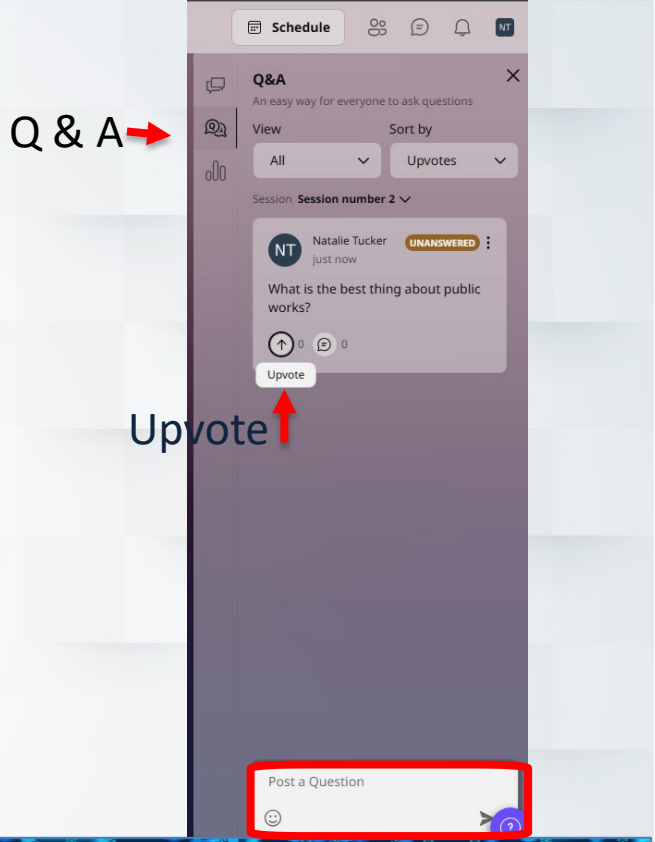
Amelia DeLeon
Human Resources Director
Mile High Flood District

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Please join us in the virtual lounge for continued discussion

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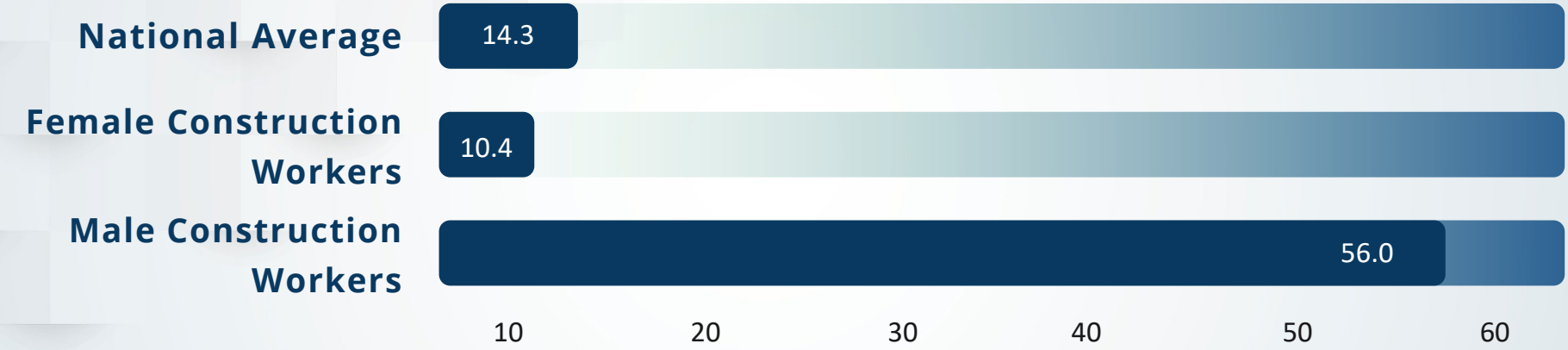


Charlotte County Public Works Mental Health Committee

Karly Greene
M&O Manager
Charlotte County Public Works



Construction Suicide Rate Per 100,000 (2021-CDC)



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FLORIDA LTAP CENTER

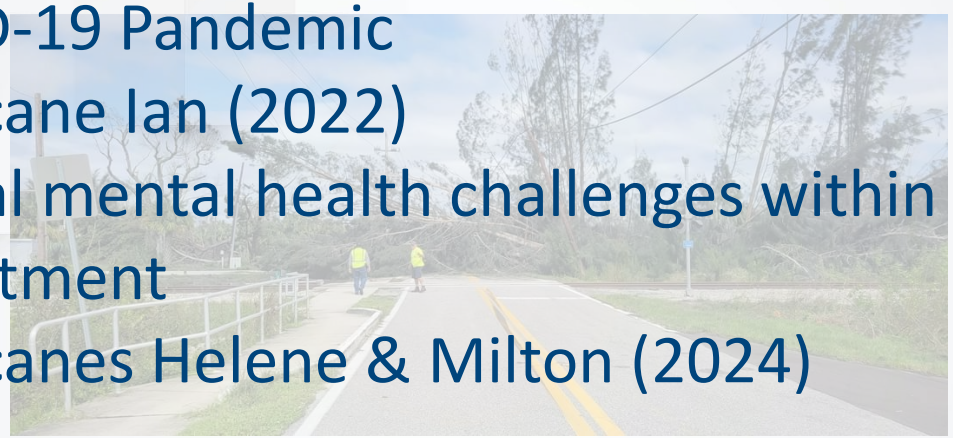
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Committee Formation

Numerous challenges over the past several years:

- COVID-19 Pandemic
- Hurricane Ian (2022)
- Critical mental health challenges within the department
- Hurricanes Helene & Milton (2024)







Department-wide survey confirmed overwhelming interest and support for a formal committee

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About the Committee

- Established May 22, 2025
- 10 Members
  - Representatives from all Public Works Divisions
- Monthly Meetings

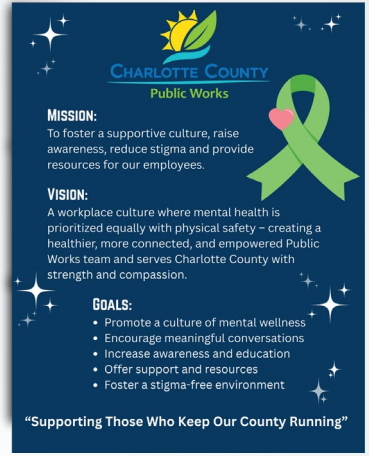




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Mission

To foster a supportive culture, raise awareness, reduce stigma, and provide resources for our employees.



Vision

A workplace culture where mental health is prioritized equally with physical safety creating a healthier, more connected, and empowered Public Works team and serves Charlotte County with strength and compassion.

Goals

- Promote a culture of mental wellness
- Encourage meaningful conversation
- Increase awareness and education
- Offer support and resources
- Foster a stigma-free environment

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Flyers


Awareness Bracelets for Employees


Department-wide kickball game



Resources Badge Tag



Team Builder Puzzle



Committee T-Shirts

Since forming the committee, we have focused on creating meaningful opportunities to connect and support one another within our department.

EVENTS

- Department Kickball Game
- Get Out, Get active
- Construction Hike for Hope
  - 2027
- Partner with Dr. Beidel from the University of Central Florida Restores

AWARENESS

- Mental Wellness Resource Flyers
- Resource Badge Tags
- Mental Health Bracelets
- Step-by-Step EAP Videos
- Webinar Flyers
- Public Works Newsletter

IN PROGRESS

- Ice Cream Social
- Team Builders
- Puzzle Team Builder
- Committee T-shirts
- Internal Awareness Videos

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Mental Health in Public Works

Applying Strategies for People, Safety & Service

Section focus: Apply strategies



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The Supervisor Balance

Stabilize the person and the operation.

Care for the person

Notice Change
Start the Conversation
Connect to Support

Protect the team

Watch Workload
Protect Privacy
Maintain Trust

Keep service moving

Clarify Priorities
Cover Critical Work
Reassess Often

The goal is not to choose between support and service — it is to manage both responsibly.

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Two Lanes of Response

Human Lane

- Notice the Change
- Start the Conversation
- Connect with Support

Operations Lane

- Assess Safety
- Stabilize Critical Work
- Reassess

The person and the work both need a supervisor response.

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Notice the Change

"This is different from what I normally see."

Behavior	withdrawal, irritability, conflict
Performance	missed details, reduced focus
Attendance	lateness, absences, presenteeism
Safety	distraction, risk-taking, near misses

A single hard day is human.
A meaningful change deserves attention.

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Start the Conversation

A simple script

"I've noticed..."
"I'm concerned..."
"Are you okay?"
"What would help?"



Do

Private Conversation
Confidential as Possible
Calm, Specific, Genuine

Don't

Minimize Feelings
Rush the Silence
Diagnose or Debate

Listen to hear and understand — not just to respond.

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Connect With Support

Stay present

Listen
Thank them for trusting you
Ask what they need right now

Follow through

Check back
Respect privacy
Keep commitments and boundaries

Offer a bridge

Help identify the next safe person or resource
—not a perfect solution

Self-Care/Peer Support

EAP/HR/Primary Care

Local Resources

988 Crisis Support

911

Support should match the need

Not every struggle is a crisis; not every crisis is an emergency.

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Assess Safety

What am I seeing?

- Distraction/Divided Attention
- Reduced Situational Awareness
- Poor Concentration
- Impaired Judgment/Problem Solving

VS



What am I assigning?

- Driving/Equipment
- Traffic Zones
- Confined Spaces/LOTO
- Working Alone

Mental distraction can create a hazard PPE cannot fix

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Make the Safe-for-Now Decision

Can the employee safely perform this task right now?

If the answer is NO or UNCERTAIN:

REASSIGN

- Documentation
- Inventory/Materials
- Route Planning
- Training/SOP Review

PAUSE

- Reassign Critical Work
- Use Leave Appropriately
- Follow Department/HR Procedures

PAIR

- Assign with Another Employee
- Add a Spotter
- Increase Check-Ins
- Use Experienced Support

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The goal is a safe, reasonable, operationally responsible next step

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Stabilize Critical Work



"I need to make an adjustment today."

MUST CONTINUE

- Routes/Service Coverage
- Response Calls
- Critical Inspections
- Safety/Compliance Tasks

CAN MOVE

- Non-Urgent Work Orders
- Lower-Priority Maintenance
- Routine Follow-Up
- Project Tasks

Reassign • Reprioritize • Split Tasks • Adjust Schedule or Sequence • Use Leave Appropriately

Workforce resilience is operational infrastructure.

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Reassess: Check All Three

Reassessment protects the person, the team, and the operation.

Person

Check Back
Respect Privacy
Watch for Changes
Confirm Support

Team

Monitor Workload
Prevent Resentment
Reduce Gossip
Protect Morale

Operation

Review Coverage
Reset Priorities
Update Leadership
Document Decisions

If support for one person creates an unsafe or unsustainable operation, elevate early.

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Set the Checkpoint

Today

End of Shift

Next Workday

Deadline-Driven

Keep the crew informed without breaking trust

"I can't discuss another employee's personal situation, but we are managing coverage. I appreciate everyone staying flexible."

Compassion does not cancel expectations



Build the Culture



Normalize

Talk about mental health like safety, fatigue, workload, and stress.

Protect

Privacy, trust, fairness, and physical &psychological safety.

Continue

Cross-train, share knowledge, and build depth before disruption.

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Culture changes when everyday behaviors become the standard —not the exception.

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References & Image Credits

- American Public Works Association. Public Works First Responders. apwa.org/resources/public-works-first-responders/
- CDC/NIOSH. Traumatic Incident Stress. cdc.gov/niosh/stress/traumaticincidentstress/
- CDC/NIOSH. Fatigue and Work. cdc.gov/niosh/fatigue/about/
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Get Help. 988lifeline.org/get-help/
- SAMHSA. Crisis Help: Suicide, Mental Health, Drug, and Alcohol Issues. samhsa.gov/find-support/in-crisis
- Original supervisor section content adapted from "PW Mental Health Matters for Supervisors," August 2026.
- Images: Generated with OpenAI image tools for illustrative training use, except APWA/Click, Listen & Learn branding provided in APWA template materials.

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The Human Side of Operational Leadership *the HR Perspective*



Amelia Deleon
Human Resources Director
Mile High Flood District (MHFD)

What HR Adds to the Response

The supervisor manages the moment. HR helps manage the process that follows.

CLARIFY THE PATH

Identify which process may apply:

- Immediate safety or crisis response
- Leave or time away
- Workplace accommodation
- EAP or benefit resources
- Performance or conduct follow-up

PROTECT CONSISTENCY

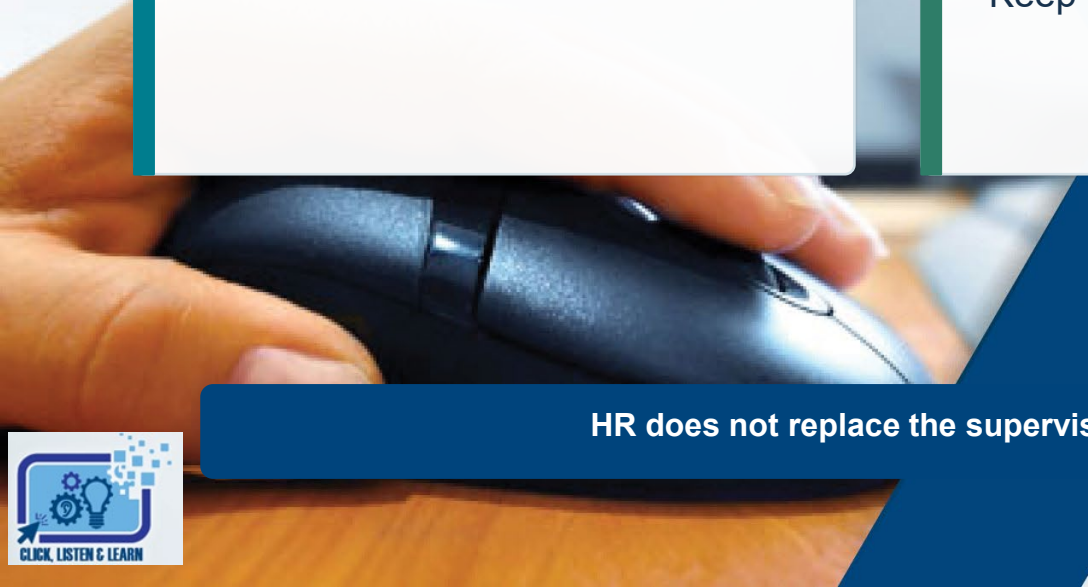
Help the organization respond fairly:

- Apply policy consistently
- Separate facts from assumptions
- Consider precedent and risk
- Coordinate decision-makers
- Keep the response proportionate

BUILD THE NEXT STEP

Move beyond today's adjustment:

- Define what is temporary
- Set decision points and ownership
- Confirm required documentation
- Plan employee communication
- Establish a follow-up date



HR does not replace the supervisor. HR helps the supervisor make the next decision well.

Make a Clean Handoff to HR

Bring the workplace facts and the decision you need help making, not a diagnosis.

BRING

- ✓ What you directly observed
- ✓ Relevant dates, frequency and impact
- ✓ The employee's own words when material
- ✓ Immediate action already taken
- ✓ The operational or safety concern
- ✓ The decision or guidance you need

LEAVE OUT

- × A medical or mental health diagnosis
- × Rumors or unverified explanations
- × Personal details unrelated to work
- × Labels such as "unstable" or "unreliable"
- × Promises about leave, pay or accommodation
- × A predetermined disciplinary outcome

Useful opening: "Here is what occurred, what we did today, and the decision I need help with."

HR Helps Identify the Right Pathway

One situation may involve more than one pathway, and the sequence matters.

IMMEDIATE RISK

Follow emergency and safety protocols first. HR supports after the immediate risk is controlled.

TIME AWAY

Evaluate applicable sick leave, other paid leave, protected leave, or an interim absence.

WORKPLACE CHANGE

Determine whether an accommodation or temporary job adjustment process should begin.

RESOURCE CONNECTION

Connect the employee with EAP, benefits, community resources, or crisis support as appropriate.

PERFORMANCE / CONDUCT

Address expectations using objective facts while accounting for any applicable protected process.

RETURN / FOLLOW-UP

Clarify restrictions, essential duties, communication, checkpoints, and who owns each next step.

The goal is not to name the condition. The goal is to select the correct workplace process.

Document the Work Issue. Protect the Personal Information.

Good records support continuity, fairness and follow-through without turning private information into workplace gossip.

SUPERVISOR NOTES

Include

- Date, time and objective observation
- Work or safety impact
- What the employee was told
- Temporary action taken
- Referral to HR and agreed follow-up

Avoid

- Speculation, labels, gossip or unnecessary medical details

NEED-TO-KNOW COMMUNICATION

To the employee

Explain the immediate decision, what happens next, and who will follow up.

To the team

Communicate assignments and coverage only. Do not explain the employee's personal circumstances.

To leadership

Share operational impact and decisions only with those who need the information.

Privacy does not mean silence. It means sharing the minimum information needed for the work and process.

From Today's Adjustment to Tomorrow's Plan

Use the same scenario, but shift the discussion to the HR decision points.



SCENARIO

The operator was removed from equipment for the day after a missed inspection and near miss. The employee disclosed a spouse's serious illness and said, "I need to keep working."

1. What facts should the supervisor give HR?
2. Which pathways might HR need to evaluate?
3. What can be communicated to the employee and crew?
4. What is the checkpoint before the next shift?

The safe-for-now decision is the beginning of the HR process, not the end of it.

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The HR Partnership

A strong response moves from human connection to operational stability to a fair workplace process.

SUPERVISOR

Notice • Talk • Stabilize

HR + SUPERVISOR

Clarify • Decide • Communicate

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Document • Reassess • Adjust



Call HR early when the decision may affect safety, leave, duties, pay, discipline, privacy or the employee's continued ability to work.

Support the person. Protect the operation. Use the right process.

Good leadership does more than keep the work moving.

It helps people know they do not have to navigate hard moments alone.

Notice the person. Protect the work. Build a culture where asking for help is a strength.

Thank you for leading with both accountability and humanity.