

SWEETHEARTS & HEROES

in partnership with

BUCKINGHAM

presents

THE



WIRE

***A Circle Prevention System for
IBEW Locals & Industrial Contractors***

THE WAR ON HOPELESSNESS

We are perhaps living among the most hopeless generations humanity has ever known, and make no mistake: **IT IS** a **WAR**. Individuals are living in more **hopeless** and **persistent states of sadness** at alarming paces. Suicidal attempts, along with anxious and depressive feelings, are on the rise.

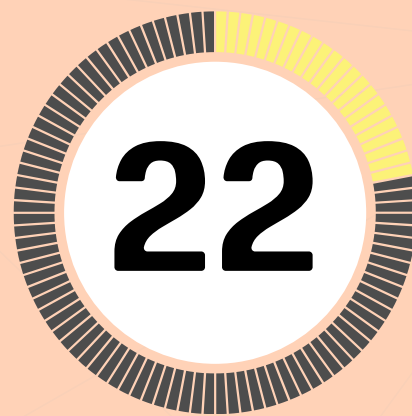
The **general**
suicide rate is



PER 100,000
including our children.



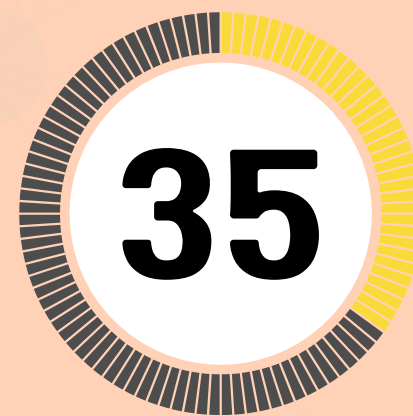
The **armed**
forces loses



PER DAY
to their own hands.



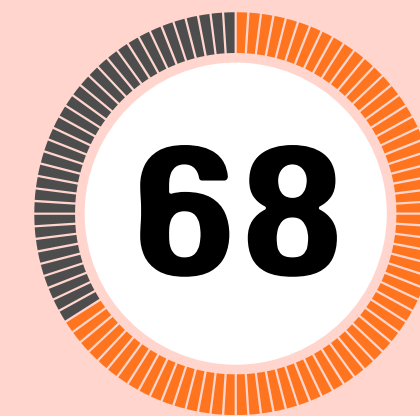
The **Marines**
lead this at



PER 100,000
lost to hopelessness.



But the scariest is in the
world of construction at



PER 100,000
taken every year to suicide.



AS HOPELESS AS THEY COME

The most devastating battle seems to be raging in the hearts and minds of those who keep our nation running. In the construction and extraction industries, **mental health has become the leading health risk**, surpassing physical dangers such as heavy

equipment, electrical hazards, and falls. From carpenters and electricians, to inside and outside electrical workers, to line clearance tree trimming and many more — those in these industries are reported to be **5x more likely to die by their own hands than from OSHA's fatal four.**

I wasn't aware of how big an issue [suicide] was in the trades... Tom and Rick raised awareness around the need for community, purpose and belonging among tradesman and women...

Kaleb Ward, Safety Manager, NOOTER Construction



THE COST OF LIVES



While suicide is often viewed as a personal or societal issue, **research shows that work conditions, including stress and isolation, increase suicide risk.** Studies link chronic pain and work disability with higher odds of suicidal ideation, attempts, and death.

NATIONAL COST

\$500+ BILLION



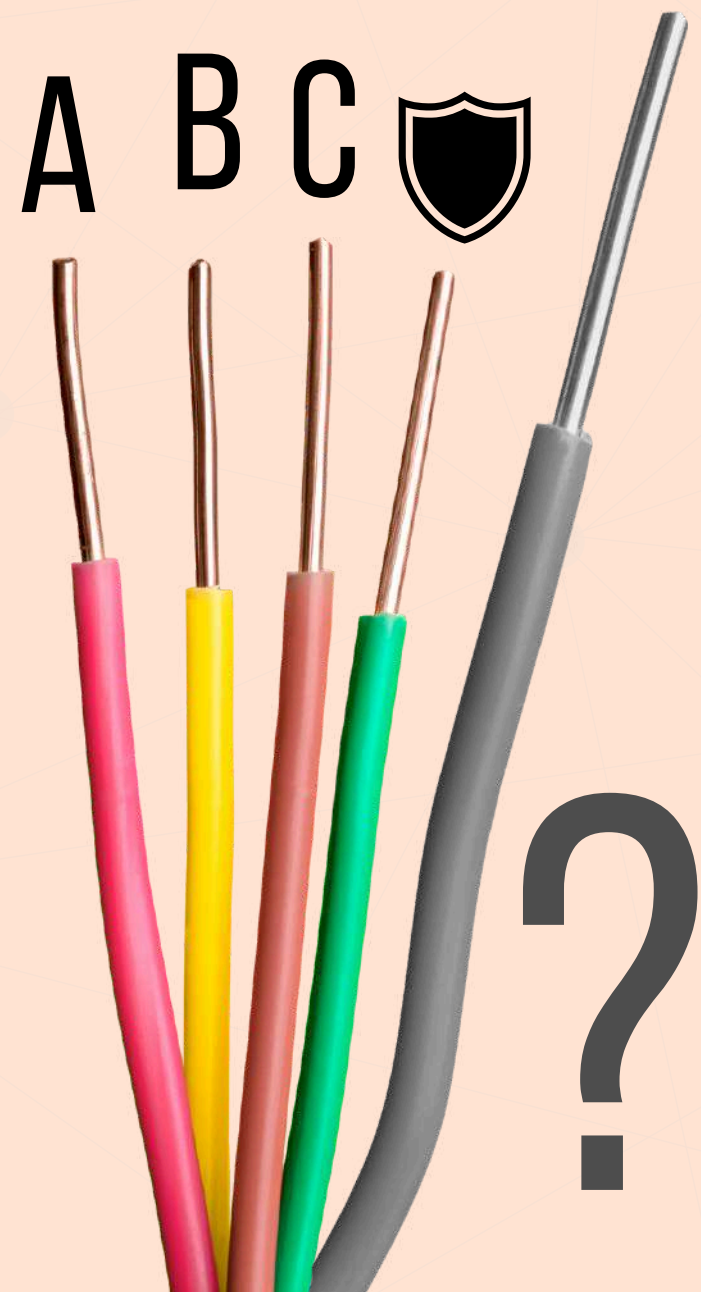
EMPLOYER COST

\$1.3 MILLION PER



The economic **cost of suicide in the U.S. exceeds \$500 billion annually.** In the workplace, the **average cost of a single suicide has been estimated at over \$1.3 million,** factoring in lost wages, productivity, and replacement costs.

TAKING CARE OF THE 5TH WIRE



Every line has its wires, just like every crew has its 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.**

**READ THE
ARTICLE >>>**

 **substack** 

THE 5TH WIRE

SWEETHEARTS & HEROES

Sweethearts & Heroes is a seasoned team with 15+ years of experience in implementing practices and philosophies that boost "Human Skills," such as empathy and trust, while building cultures of belonging around positive leadership.

TOM MURPHY

Founder, Sweethearts & Heroes

All-American Wrestler

Retired UFC Fighter

Corporate Executive (Rail America)

National Keynote Speaker

Business Entrepreneur



SEE OUR WORK



SEE OUR IMPACT



OUR PARTNERS



LEARN MORE HERE



WHAT WE DO

We've empowered over 2 million students, educators, service members, athletes, and professionals across the country. We build community through peer support networks and healthy norms to tackle issues like hopelessness and destructive decisions, building cultures that WIN in life and business.

CHAD ALTHISER

Sweethearts & Heroes Circle Liaison

Retired U.S. Marine Corps Major

3x Combat Vetarn & Medal w/Valor

Ironman & Leademan Finisher

Leftwich Trophy Nominee

Semper Fi Odyssey Team Leader

RICK YAROSH

Co-Founder, Sweethearts & Heroes

Retired U.S. Army Sergeant

Purple Heart Recipient

Tunnel to Tower Spokesman

National Keynote Speaker

Resilience & HOPE Expert



OUR VISION

To create an upstream prevention system that replaces today's reactive approaches to the mounting destructive decisions in the trades. We aim to cultivate a culture rooted in belonging and brotherhood — one that fosters hope and trust through meaningful connections and relationships. We envision a future in which those in the construction trades support one another with strength and integrity, no longer dependent on intervention but upheld by one another before a crisis occurs.

OUR MISSION

We are our brother's keeper. Each day, we commit to embracing the friction of growth by sharpening the brothers and sisters to our left and right, just as we receive their sharpening in return. Through integrity, accountability, and humility, we'll forge an unbreakable brotherhood that embodies the truth that the greatest love is to give of ourselves for our brothers. Together, we are the answer, carrying the strength and hope that prevent despair.

OUR FORMAT

The crux of our program uses our Circle formats (FLASH & Round Table), creating a space where every participant's voice is equal, an optimal format for building trust and open dialogue. Combining your existing safety protocols with our human connection practice, these sessions bring teams together to confront challenges, sharpen one another, and strengthen bonds of brotherhood. With this format, we cultivate meaningful connections, reinforce integrity, and create a culture where support and prevention happen naturally, before crises arise.

UPSTREAM PREVENTION

The 5th Wire is an environmentally human-focused **prevention-by-design approach**. Just as we train, equip, inspect, and test our gear and safety procedures to prevent physical injuries, **we need proactive strategies and tools to protect our employees' mental health and safety.**

We've developed an "upstream prevention" system to ensure individuals have the necessary tools, resources, and support structures in place to counteract the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that can lead to destructive decisions.

Upstream programs aim to address the root causes or risk factors before problems manifest.

Downstream interventions focus on treating or managing problems once they already occurred.



THE POWER OF BELONING

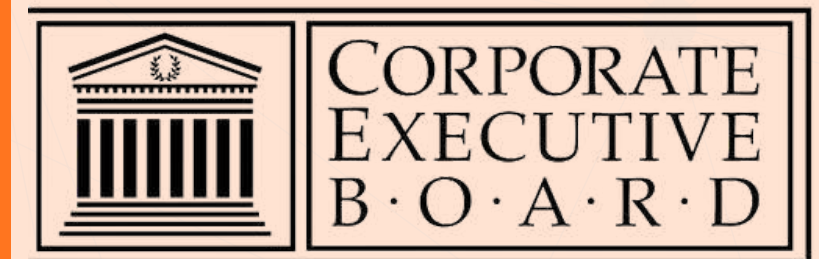
“When people feel like they belong at work, they are more productive, motivated, engaged and **3.5 times more likely to contribute** to their fullest potential, according to our research at the Center for Talent Innovation.”

**Harvard
Business
Review**

Forbes

“A Towers Watson study concludes that companies with **highly effective communication practices enjoy 47% higher total returns** to shareholders compared with the firms that are least effective at communicating.”

“Those employees who are most committed perform **20% better** and are **87% less likely to leave the organization** - indicating the significance of engagement to organizational performance.”



NETWORKS OF SUPPORT

For nearly two decades, Sweethearts & Heroes has addressed these issues by empowering conversations, activating empathy, and building peer support networks that cultivate a culture of belonging while boosting readiness and resilience.

...[Circle was] probably the most moving 45 minutes of my adult life after the marriage to my wife and the birth of my children... Can't say enough of what it has made me reflect on in my life and how to be a better human being and listen to others!!

John M. Dean, Regional Risk Manager Northline Utilities, LLC

By establishing healthy social norms focused on help-seeking behaviors and leveraging collective strengths within your team, we create cultures that mitigate mental health challenges like depression, suicide, and substance abuse.



*When team members feel valued and like they belong, it naturally enhances job satisfaction and improves retention. **For every \$1 spent on mental health support (prevention), employers can see a***

★ \$4 return in productivity. ★



A CIRCLE CULTURE

The Circle format is one of history's oldest human connections and community-building practices, stretching back over 400,000 years. It helps individuals and communities foster a sense of belonging and purpose, establish positive social norms, build networks of support, and develop critical human skills for personal and collective well-being.



Read the Article!



What is Circle?



"How" of Circle



"Why" of Circle

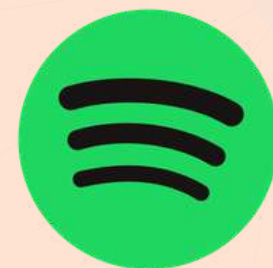
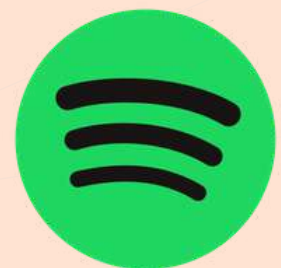
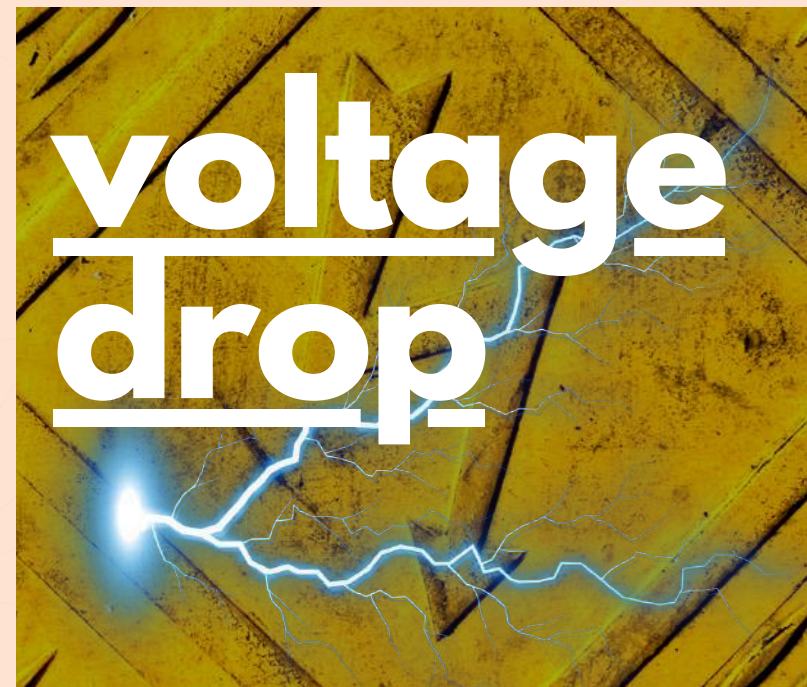
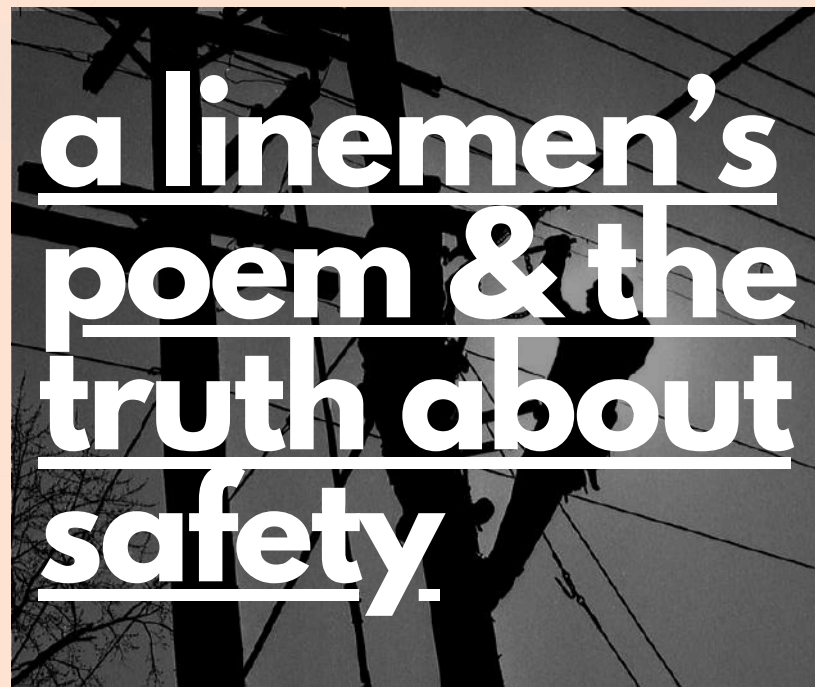


It was eye-opening to sit with a group of men in a circle, and be able to be open and transparent, to be raw and share things with a human that I normally would not share...

Rob McKinney, Construction Safety Advocate, SALUS



WANT TO LEARN MORE?



OUR PROGRAM 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 of the destructive decisions being made in the trades and introduce you to our 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!



THE 5⁺ WIRE

PLATFORM

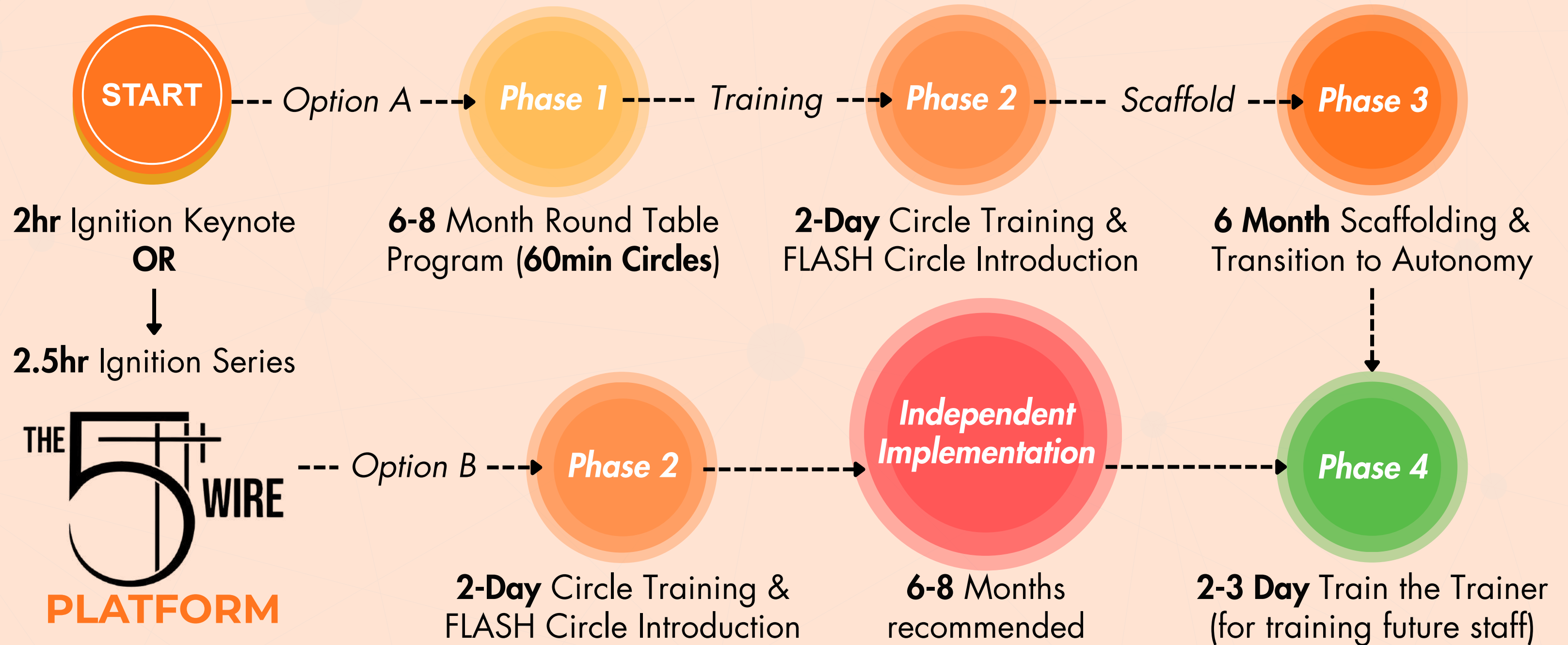
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[> LEARN MORE](#)



5TH WIRE PROGRAM OVERVIEW



OUR APPRENTICE PROGRAM

After ignition, 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 electrical workers of the future** who are 5-10 years away from running the job, leading the crew, and shaping the culture.

PHASE 1 — The Round Table Program

Our apprentice program optimally begins with a 6-to-8-Month "Round Table" Program, during which an S&H Circle Facilitator will lead 1-to-2-hour community-building Circles once a month as we integrate your apprentices and instructors into the Circle practice. During this process, we will also help identify your company's "gatekeepers" — those who possess prestige and influence, which are vital for sustaining the practice.

PHASE 2 — Round Table & FLASH Training

After the "Round Table" Program, instructors and/or apprentice "gatekeepers" are selected to complete a 1-to-2-day training in our Round Table Circle Facilitation (enabling them to sustain Circle) as well as introduce them to our FLASH Circle practice, which takes the core essence of Round Table Circles and combines human connection with your existing safety briefings in streamlined 20-30-minute "stand-up" or "tailboard" style Circles for optimal in-the-field/on-the-job implementation.

THE FLASH CIRCLE PROCESS

While a Round Table Circle is the gold standard for depth, it is often impractical for daily field operations. **The FLASH Circle is the solution to this productivity-effectiveness gap — a 20–30-minute session designed to “piggyback” onto existing routines and job-site rhythms** such as safety briefings or tailboard/stand-up meetings. Built to move at “lightning speed” without sacrificing depth, it follows a specific sequence:



Physical Activation: Brief movement to engage the team’s focus, tied to a central concept or idiom.

Focused Safety Discussion: Grounded in real-world scenarios and relevant work-related topics.

Human Connection: A discussion around a human thread that bridges physical safety with peer support.

OUR APPRENTICE PROGRAM

PHASE 3 – Scaffolding & Sustainability

The **MOST CRITICAL STAGE** of this protocol is scaffolding, where we provide a gradual release of responsibility rather than leaving trained facilitators to implement Circle on their own. After initial training, newly trained “Circle Weavers” benefit from practicing and participating in multiple Circles led side-by-side with a Sweethearts & Heroes facilitator. Over a 6-8-month period, our team will work alongside yours in the field to scaffold the application, allowing your team to observe, practice, and internalize the process in real time, building the confidence to lead autonomously. In addition, during the remainder of an apprenticeship, every training or class day should begin with a FLASH Circle, led by your apprentice or instructor “gatekeepers,” and they should join any ongoing Round Table Circles with newer apprentices or get together with each other periodically.

PHASE 4 – Train-the-Trainer

For training any new or future staff in the Circle facilitation process, any instructors and/or apprentice “gatekeepers” with 20+ facilitated Circles (Round Table or FLASH combination) may attend a Train-the-Trainer Circle Facilitation Training, enabling them to train future apprentices, instructors, and/or contractors in Circle facilitation. These individuals will serve as administrators for any new Phase 1 initiatives.

In addition, all apprentices who “top out” but have completed Phase 2 of the 5th Wire Program, we highly encourage them to return regularly to the School or Union Hall and participate in and/or facilitate (assist in facilitating) Round Table Circles with new apprentices

OUR JOURNEYMAN PROGRAM

*After ignition, our journeyman program can take two different routes: **A)** follow the same progression as the apprentice program, or **B)** focus on training safety professionals, frontline supervisors, and journeyman “gatekeepers” in the Round Table and FLASH Circle Training to immediately begin implementing FLASH Circles in your organization.*

OPTION B — Round Table + FLASH Training with Independent Implementation

In the modern corporate landscape, balancing high-level psychological safety with operational productivity is a constant challenge. Whether an organization consists of a small team or a global workforce of 20,000, the goal remains the same: fostering human connection without halting industry. With this 1-to-2-day training in our Round Table & FLASH Circle Facilitation, you will be able to integrate this process into your current structures and build the "5th Wire" (relational connections that protect mental and emotional well-being) without adding yet another meeting to overburdened schedules. After training, we highly recommend a weekly (at minimum twice a month) FLASH Circle tied to your safety briefings, with an additional recommendation of a monthly or quarterly Round Table Circle. In addition, the 5th Wire Platform will include training courses and additional resources to help improve Circle skills while providing key human discussions and safety concepts.

TRAIN THE TRAINER

We 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.

Sweethearts and Heroes provided us with some tools to help have the courage to speak up, help others, and see that other possibilities do exist. They’re helping the industry learn that we can still be tough and show that we care.

Nathan Boutwell, Vice President EHS & Training Northline Utilities, LLC

Apprentice Program

Journeyman Program

Management Training

Cultural Change

OPTION #1 (RECOMMENDED)

Sweethearts & Heroes Full Implementation | After our ignition event, we'll return for 6-8 in-person visits where we'll run our full culture-changing Round Table Circle Program. During this process, we'll:



Run a monthly series of Circles with your members



Instruct your leadership in segments as we progress



Help identify and build your internal Circle team

Sweethearts & Heroes Circle Training | As we transition to handing implementation over to your foremen, management, and gatekeepers, we'll conduct training on our Round Table and FLASH Circle processes.

While union halls can continue our Round Table Circle practices, our FLASH Circle process is a distinct practice designed to merge with existing safety briefings for practical, in-the-field use. This training will ensure sustainability after we've left, so your Circle practice remains in use.

OPTION #2 (A HYBRID)

Sweethearts & Heroes Circle Training | After our ignition event, we'll return for a training on our Round Table and/or FLASH Circle process with your foreman, management, and gatekeepers to merge Circle with existing safety briefings. This process includes:



The importance of Activation for learning and bonding



How to merge your safety topics with human conversations



Closing your briefing with gratitude and positive norms

DIY Implementation | Our Round Table and FLASH Circle training will allow your foreman, gatekeepers, and management team to run culture-changing Circles as well as simple 20–30 minute “stand-up” Circles built around safety concepts and connection.

*Your team will also be supported with all our program digital assets through our **5th Wire Online Platform**. Individuals who complete this training will also be eligible for a future Train the Trainer.*

OPTION #3 (AUTONOMOUS)

DIY Training & Implementation | With our ignition event, you'll receive our **5th Wire Online Platform** and all its associated digital assets. The platform includes:



The 5th Wire HOPE Series
(based on keynote) for
future employee onboarding



Our **Round Table & FLASH Circle Masterclass** for training
your foreman and gatekeepers



Round Table & FLASH Circles,
pre-designed starters built
around premier safety topics

The 5th Wire Platform | While nothing replaces embodied, synchronous learning/training/practice, our online platform has everything you need to keep our message going. The platform is designed specifically for IBEW Locals and Contractors.

All videos and digital assets can all be integrated into your existing learning management system.

Intro



PLAY

Episode #1



PLAY

Episode #2



PLAY

IGNITE THE NEXT GENERATION



*Our foundational work begins in the world of education with K-12 students. As part of our 5th Wire Program, we aim to **present our foundational message of HOPE and Action to your local school(s) and community**— combining our efforts to stop the destructive decisions that are skyrocketing in our youth and promote a hopeful future in the trades.*

It reinforced how powerful it is for our students to see strong, authentic examples of hope, compassion, and perseverance from adults beyond our walls... It helped create a meaningful experience for our students and reminded all of us how impactful community partnerships can be.

Mark Schultz, Principal at CABOCES RISE Academy



WHO WE ARE WORKING WITH



WALKER
TREE CARE INC



LOCAL 42
IBEW



HAUGLAND GROUP DIVISIONS

No session exemplified that more than the Sweethearts & Heroes' keynote and Circle breakouts. As someone who witnessed their Circle session firsthand, I can tell you this isn't just another talk—it's a transformational experience. The Sweethearts & Heroes team will lay bare the data on the construction mental-health crisis, share deeply personal stories of loss and hope, and arm us with practical, strength-based tools to build real resilience... If you want to elevate your safety culture from compliance-only to a community that genuinely looks out for one another, Sweethearts & Heroes is for you!



Mike Starner, NECA's Executive Director of Outside Line Safety

on the Safety Professionals Conference in Des Moines, IA | May 20, 2025