

Biohazard Remediation and Suicide Prevention

Trauma informed care and suicide prevention are becoming a more prevalent topic of conversation in the United States. The 988 Crisis Line just closed out its first year on July 16th, receiving over 5 million calls and texts nationwide. San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge has expanded from emergency phones and security patrols to its suicide deterrent system—a giant net underneath the bridge crossing that is set to be completed at the end of 2023. Organizations, legislators and communities all over the nation are collaborating in an effort to lessen the suicide rate—and crime scene cleaners may also be an integral part of that conversation.

Crime Scene Cleaners are revered as remediation specialists—technicians with the strength and wherewithal to go into potentially infectious or gruesome spaces after tragedy in order to make them safe to occupy again. But technicians also witness more often than most the true aftermath of a traumatic death. From speaking with family members, sifting through personal affects, and the clean-up itself—technicians have more to offer than just this particular service.

Reaper Clean, Fresno's local biohazard remediation company, has crossed over into the arena of advocacy for a surplus of issues intersecting with their work, but suicide remains the most prevalent reason for action. Crime Scene Cleaners for Prevention is one of many team names that will be featured at the Woodward Park "Out of the Darkness Walk" September 23rd 2023. The walk is a fundraiser put on by suicide loss survivors and supporters to raise money for American Foundation for Suicide Prevention with the brave goal of decreasing the suicide rate 20% by the year 2025. There are walks happening all over the United States, and everyone is welcome to donate, join a team, or start their own.

As Reaper Clean completed a service for a family near the end of July, another team was added to the roster in honor of their loved one. Suicide is complicated, and although not all suicides can be prevented—there are still many lives that can be saved through community support and knowing the signs, which are:

Talking about wanting to die. Looking for a means to harm or kill themselves. Feeling hopeless or desperate. Giving away possessions. Getting affairs in order suddenly. Reckless behavior. Uncontrolled anger. Increased drug or alcohol use. Social withdrawal. Anxiety or agitation. Changes in sleep. Sudden shifts in mood. No sense of purpose.

Reaching out to people of concern, especially if the behavior is new or is related to a traumatic event or loss, is important. Also, keep in mind that asking somebody directly if they are thinking about suicide does not heighten the risk of suicide but rather creates a space to confront it and offer support.

Reaper Clean will be walking in honor of a friend and for all of the families they have served. In doing so they are hoping to connect with community members and local resources to provide a better support network for the families that cross their path both on and off scene.

Crime Scene Cleaners can do more than the remediation work—if cleaners can come together to create discourse around the data they've collected from scenes and experiences, they can also become fierce advocates for suicide loss survivors and contributors towards suicide prevention and education, and the work is starting right now.

For more information about Reaper Clean, go to www.reaperclean.com, email onthescene@reaperclean.com, or follow on Facebook, Instagram, or Tiktok @reaper_clean.