

Women Belong in Construction: Say Her Name – Amber Czech

Tonight, as I signed off from a Zoom meeting with the NAWIC, I mourned in spirit with my sisters in the trades... and wrote the following with purpose... driven by the tragic loss of Amber Czech:

Amber is a 20-year-old welder whose life was stolen in a place where she should have been safe: her workplace. She represents a generation of women entering the trades with hope, ambition, and trust—trust that was fatally betrayed.

Amber's story is heartbreakng, but it's not an isolated incident. It reveals an uncomfortable truth: women in construction face a level of hostility and threat that too often goes ignored, unspoken, and unanswered. The silence and inaction—the missed signs, the comments that "women don't belong in construction," the shrugged-off warnings—these are not minor oversights—they are failures with horrific consequences.

There have been other deeply troubling cases of violence against women on construction sites across our nation. In 2017, Outi Hicks—a union carpenter apprentice in Fresno, California—was bludgeoned to death by a male coworker at her jobsite. In 2021, Lizbeth Mass, a construction flagger in the Bronx, was shot and killed while working on City Island; her killer was sentenced to life in prison. In Philadelphia, a young woman was found stabbed to death at a construction site, adding yet another name to this tragic list.

Each case is a reminder that **ignoring warning signs or dismissing threats** can have **fatal consequences**. We cannot allow these tragedies to become statistics.

The construction sector is growing more diverse, but for many women, entering this field means battling negative work environments and, at its worst, violence. Consider the following recent findings:

- Over 80% of tradeswomen report experiencing harassment or discrimination on the job.

- Nearly half of women in construction have faced some form of inappropriate or threatening behavior, with many left fearing for their safety.
- Too often, perpetrators are known within their workplaces—yet intervention remains rare.

Why? Because there is still a culture that tolerates the “boys’ club” behaviors, overlooks warning signs, and allows bullying, threats, and hostility to flourish in silence.

Let’s be clear: every time we fail to speak up, to intervene... every time we accept “that’s just how it is,” we promote risk.

Silence is not neutrality; it’s complicity.

Amber’s death was preceded by warning signs—behaviors that went unaddressed. This failure is not just an individual one; it implicates the entire systems of leadership, supervision, and culture in our industry.

Workplace violence is preventable when signals are recognized and acted upon.

Safety must go beyond physical hazards and PPE—it must encompass a psychological and emotional safety mindset that every worker needs to perform at their highest level.

Accountability Is Not Optional!

Company owners, supervisors, contractors, union reps, safety officers—your duty is non-negotiable. **Vigilance is mandatory.** Action is required.

This means:

- Creating clear, accessible, retaliation-free systems for reporting harassment and threats.
- Enforcing zero-tolerance policies for discrimination, bullying, and all forms of violence.
- Providing meaningful training—not just for tradespeople, but for supervisors and managers—on bystander intervention, conflict de-escalation, and recognizing warning signs.

- Holding leaders accountable who fail to act in a proactive and responsible manner.
- Fostering a culture where tradeswomen are accepted, respected, and protected!

This is about more than compliance—it's about resetting our industry's culture.

Women belong in construction!

They deserve dignity, opportunity, and above all, safety. It's everyone's responsibility to challenge toxic attitudes, assist colleagues who face mistreatment, and ensure that coming forward is met with support, not retaliation.

Let's honor Amber's memory not just with words of condolence, but with decisive action.

Ask yourself:

- What systems are in place at your organization for reporting concerns? Are they accessible? Are they used?
- Do your trainings merely check the box, or do they empower and prepare people to intervene when it matters?
- Are owners, field managers, and supervisors held accountable when they ignore, minimize, or fail to act?
- What are you doing—right now—to ensure every tradeswoman under your watch goes home safe?

Safety is not a slogan; it is a daily commitment. It means paying attention, speaking up, and refusing to be passive in the face of risk.

Amber deserved to come home.

Every tradeswoman deserves to come home.

Every worker deserves to come home.

Let's build a construction industry where no one's future is violently stolen, where every act of vigilance is a tribute to the dignity and worth of our colleagues, and where tragedy is met - not with resignation, but with resolve.

Together, let's commit: Never again.

-Anna Pelletier

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Data retrieved from:

ENR's 2022 "#MeToo in Construction"

Tradeswomen Task Force

Construction Legal Services – 2024

CPWR – The Center for Construction Research and Training

NAWIC – The National Association of Women in Construction