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Police talk man down from roof

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Police talked a man down to safety from the top of a University of Florida building where he could have fallen to his death Tuesday.

The 39-year-old man, who works as a plumber assigned to the J. Hillis Miller Health Center, was spotted just before 4 p.m. perched at the edge of the Dental Tower, standing outside a railing on top of the building, which has at least 11 floors. Less than one hour later, police had convinced the man to come down.

People standing below could see the man, wearing blue jeans and no shirt, on the south side of the structure facing Archer Road.

An emergency vehicle blocked one westbound lane of Archer Road, slowing traffic, and police closed a parking lot near the building as officers tried to talk with the man.

Shands security first contacted University of Florida Police with a report of a suicidal person atop the building, said UF Police Capt. Jeff Holcomb.

UF Police Capt. Eric Rice and Sgt. Greg Streukens were on the roof with the man, urging him away from the building's edge. Holcomb said Streukens has received crisis intervention training.

The man was facing officers, speaking with them and with his back turned toward the edge.

"The problem was, as close as he was, he could fall at any point," Holcomb said.



ERICA BROUGH/The Gainesville Sun
A University Police officer coaxes a suicidal employee who was threatening to jump from the Dental Tower at the J. Hillis Miller Health Center at the University of Florida on Tuesday.

Police could not immediately say what prompted the man's actions or whether he had been working in the building before he stepped out onto the roof's edge. The man was hired last year.

The man was examined for any injuries after he was escorted from the roof and later taken for a mental health evaluation.

Holcomb said campus police have been called to deal with similar incidents in the past at UF buildings. In 1993, officers tried to reach a UF graduate student who was hanging onto a wall atop Ben Hill Griffin Stadium and apparently let go, falling to his death.
