

Occupations and Workplaces

Construction Worker - General

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What is the construction industry?

The construction industry is responsible for building, repairing, and maintaining infrastructure. It generally requires its workers to work in ever-changing locations and environments. This profile is intended for general construction workers.

What does a construction worker do?

Construction workers include a broad range of workers involved in construction activities. Construction workers can be an umbrella term for the different trades and disciplines on a construction project, including labourers, steel workers, [plumbers](#), [roofers](#), [electricians](#), [welders](#), and many more.

Some of the main duties of a general construction worker are to:

- Install various commercial, industrial or residential systems.
- Ensure that projects conform to building codes and regulations.
- Use, clean and maintain various types of equipment.
- Supervise or apprentice other workers.

What is a construction trade?

A construction trade refers to a specific craft or occupation within the construction industry that involves specialized skills and knowledge. Some trades require going to trade school, while other skills are learned through an apprenticeship under the guidance of an experienced professional or a combination of the two.

What is the minimum age requirement for a construction worker?

Every [Canadian jurisdiction](#) has a minimum age requirement for construction workers. Check your jurisdiction's requirements. A good practice is to pair young and new workers with a more experienced worker. Studies from organizations such as the Institute for Work and Health indicate that new workers are more vulnerable to injury at any age.

What are some health and safety issues for construction workers?

- Pain or injury from physical overexertion, [repetitive manual tasks](#), [prolonged standing](#), or working in [awkward positions](#).
- Exposure to [moulds, fungi](#) and [bird](#) or [rodent](#) droppings.
- Exposure to [lead](#), [wood dust](#), asbestos, paints, solvents, and other toxic [chemicals or materials](#)
- Working in extreme [hot](#) or [cold](#) temperatures and [UV radiation](#).
- Working in adverse weather conditions (such as [cold](#), [heat](#), [high winds](#), or [lightning](#)).
- Working with [hand tools](#), [powered tools](#), and heavy powered equipment.
- Excess [vibration](#) in the hands, arms, or body from powered tools or equipment.
- [Confined spaces](#).
- [Noise](#).
- [Working at heights](#).
- Working with [portable ladders](#) and [fixed ladders](#).
- [Electrical hazards](#).
- [Hazardous energy control](#), including [lockout/tag out](#).
- Working with cranes, hoists, and other [material handling equipment](#).
- [Slips, trips and falls](#).

- Respiratory hazards from wood dust.
 - Explosion and fire hazards from [combustible dusts](#).
 - [Stress](#).
 - [Shift work](#) or [extended work days](#).
 - [Working alone](#).
 - Struck by mobile equipment.
 - Maintaining [good housekeeping](#).
 - [Workplace violence and harassment](#).
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What are some preventive measures for construction workers?

- Scan the workplace for existing and potential hazards before work begins and take appropriate controls. Be aware that conditions change constantly.
 - Inspect all equipment and machinery for any defects before work begins.
 - Keep tools and equipment in good working order.
 - Use correct [personal protective equipment](#) and apparel, including [safety footwear](#).
 - Keep all work areas clear of clutter and equipment.
 - Avoid awkward body positions or take frequent breaks.
 - Learn safe lifting techniques.
 - Have training before beginning any task, especially high-risk activities such as working at heights, hazardous energy control (lockout/tag out), or confined space entry.
 - Follow a recommended shiftwork pattern, and be aware of the associated hazards.
 - Be aware of seasonal hazards from working in extreme temperatures.
 - Know how to get help in an emergency for working alone situations.
 - Be aware of the emergency response plans before work begins.
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What are some good general safe work practices?

- Follow safety procedures for:
 - [Confined space](#) entry
 - Working at heights
 - [Electrical](#) safety
 - [Lockout/tagout](#) of machinery
 - Machinery and [safeguard](#)
 - [Ladders](#)
 - [Material handling](#)
 - Working with tools and equipment
 - [Working alone](#)
 - Extreme work temperatures
 - [Fire safety](#)
- Practice safe [lifting](#) techniques.
- Know how to [identify hazards](#)
- Follow company safety rules and safe operating procedures.
- Stay informed about chemical hazards and [WHMIS 2015](#).
- Know how to [report a hazard](#).
- Follow [good housekeeping](#) procedures.

Where can I get more information?

General information is available in OSH Answers or through the CCOHS person-to-person [Inquiries Service](#).

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