



Construction Laborer

About

Construction laborers and helpers perform many tasks that require physical labor on construction sites. Construction laborers and helpers work on almost all construction sites, performing a wide range of tasks varying in complexity from very easy to extremely difficult and hazardous.

Job Outlook and Salary



- Projected regional employment in 2024 is **28,462**
- This occupation was identified as a high-demand job based on regional construction industry feedback.
- The average annual wage is **\$57,573** (Seattle MSA)
- Hourly wages range from **\$18.65/HR** (25th percentile) to **\$31.60/HR** (75th percentile)

Job Tasks



- Clean and prepare construction sites by removing debris and possible hazards
- Load or unload building materials to be used in construction
- Build or take apart bracing, scaffolding, and temporary structures
- Dig trenches, backfill holes, or compact earth to prepare for construction
- Operate or tend equipment and machines used in construction
- Follow construction plans and instructions from supervisors or more experienced workers
- Assist craftworkers with their duties

Education and Training



- Although formal education is not typically required for most positions, helpers of electricians and helpers of pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters typically need a high school diploma. High school classes in mathematics, blueprint reading, welding, and other vocational subjects can be helpful.
- Construction laborers and helpers typically learn through on-the-job training (OJT) after being hired by a construction contractor. Workers usually learn by performing tasks under the guidance of experienced workers.
- Although the majority of construction laborers and helpers learn by assisting experienced workers, some construction laborers may opt for apprenticeship programs. These programs generally include 2 to 4 years of technical instruction and OJT.

Licensures



- Laborers who remove hazardous materials (hazmat) must meet the federal and state requirements for hazardous materials removal workers.
- Depending on the work they do, laborers may need specific certifications, which may be attained through the Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA). Rigging and scaffold building are commonly attained certifications. Certification can help workers prove that they have the knowledge to perform more complex tasks.

Work Schedule



- Like many construction workers, most laborers and helpers work full time. Although they must sometimes stop work because of bad weather, they may work overtime to meet deadlines. Laborers and helpers on highway and bridge projects may need to work overnight to avoid causing major traffic disruptions. In some parts of the country, construction laborers and helpers may work only during certain seasons. For example, in northern climates, cold weather frequently disrupts construction activity in the winter.
- Some construction laborers are self-employed. In contrast, very few helpers are self-employed.

Skills



- **Color vision.** Construction laborers and helpers may need to be able to distinguish colors to do their job. For example, an electrician's helper must be able to distinguish different colors of wire to help the lead electrician.
- **Math skills.** Construction laborers and some helpers need to perform basic math calculations while measuring on jobsites or assisting a surveying crew.
- **Mechanical skills.** Construction laborers are frequently required to operate and maintain equipment, such as jackhammers.
- **Physical stamina.** Construction laborers and helpers must have the endurance to perform strenuous tasks throughout the day. Highway laborers, for example, spend hours on their feet—often in hot temperatures—with few breaks.
- **Physical strength.** Construction laborers and helpers must often lift heavy materials or equipment. For example, cement mason helpers must move cinder blocks, which typically weigh more than 40 pounds each.

Technology



- **Spreadsheet software:** Microsoft Excel
- **Office suite software:** Microsoft Office
- **Operating system software:** Microsoft Windows

Opportunities for Advancement



- Through experience and training, construction laborers and helpers can advance into positions that involve more complex tasks. For example, **laborers may earn certifications in welding, erecting scaffolding, or finishing concrete, and then spend more time performing those activities.** Similarly, helpers sometimes move into construction craft occupations after gaining experience in the field. For example, experience as an electrician’s helper may lead someone to becoming an apprentice electrician.

Education and Training Resources

The following regional education and training programs are examples of programs in the region that can help you obtain education and credentials to become a Construction Laborer. Some programs may require additional preparation and completion of prerequisites.



County	Programs
King County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associates General Contractors of WA (https://www.agcwa.com/contact/)• Apprenticeship & Nontraditional Employment for Women (https://anewcareer.org/)• Core Plus (https://core-plus.org/)

Resources to Scholarships and Assistance Programs

- Washington State Opportunity Scholarship: <https://www.waopportunityscholarship.org/about/>
- Washington College Grant: <https://wsac.wa.gov/wcg>

References

- 2021 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates. (2021). Retrieved December 16, 2021 from <https://media.esd.wa.gov/esdwa/Default/ESDWAGOV/labor-market-info/Libraries/Occupational-reports/OES/2021-Occupational-employment-and-wage-estimates.pdf>
- Construction Laborers at My Next Move. (n.d.). Retrieved August 18, 2021, from <https://www.mynextmove.org/profile/summary/47-2061.00>
- Construction Laborers and Helpers: Occupational Outlook Handbook: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2021, from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/construction-and-extraction/construction-laborers-and-helpers.htm#tab-1>
- Occupational Employment Projections, Washington State Employment Security Department, 2021.
- Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, Washington State Employment Security Department, 2021.
- Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. Retrieved January 25, 2022. *Washington Career Bridge*.
- Washington Career Bridge. <https://www.careerbridge.wa.gov/>