

MOHSS

Montana Occupational Health & Safety Surveillance

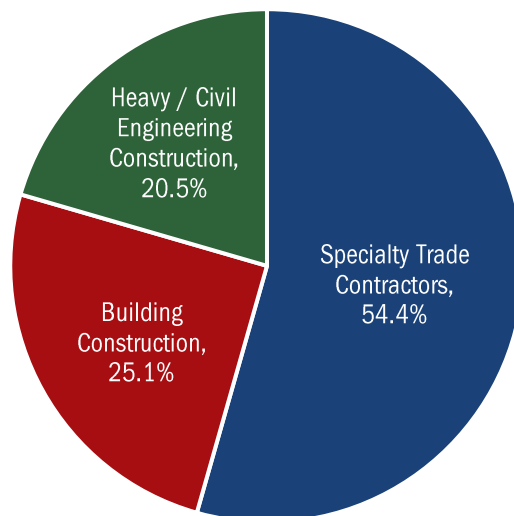
May 2025

Workplace Safety in the Construction Industry

While Montanans work outdoors in every season, summer is the busiest time for outdoor work activities. Long, warm days provide workers with ideal conditions for productivity; as a result, seasonal industries see an increase in employment.¹ The outdoor workforce includes numerous diverse occupations, but the most common area of employment is construction. Whether focused on buildings, highways, or other projects, construction workers engage in numerous tasks to develop or repair infrastructure. In doing so, they encounter both commonplace and unique working hazards. This newsletter examines the construction industry, identifies major sources of injury, and provides guidance for staying safe this summer.

Overview of the Construction Industry

In 2024, the Montana construction industry employed nearly 40,000 workers, representing roughly 7.5% of the state's total workforce and accounting for about half of workers primarily working outdoors.² This workforce is further divided into building construction, heavy construction and civil engineering, and specialty trade contractors. The most common occupation within the construction industry is general laborers; other common occupations include specialists such as carpenters, electricians, equipment operators, and managers. Construction workers are found in every county in the state, with the state's most populous counties reporting larger per-capita proportions of the construction workforce.³



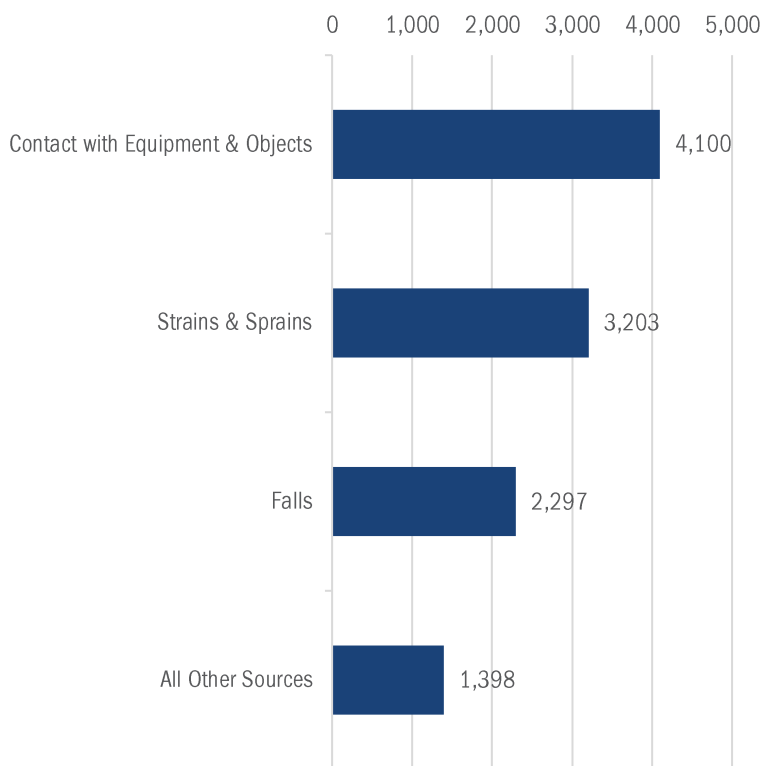
Occupational Injuries & Hazards

From 2020 to 2024, Montana construction workers reported roughly 11,000 injuries.⁴ Contact with equipment or objects, sprains and strains, and falls being the leading causes of injury. These injuries occurred for construction workers at comparable rates to workers in other industries; however, the construction industry reported elevated rates of injury from causes linked to unique working conditions found in their job sites, including:

- Falls from heights
- Hit by motor vehicle near a roadway
- Traffic accidents
- Caught by equipment or power tools
- Hit by falling object
- Electrocution
- Trench collapses
- Objects / Particles in eyes
- Foot punctures

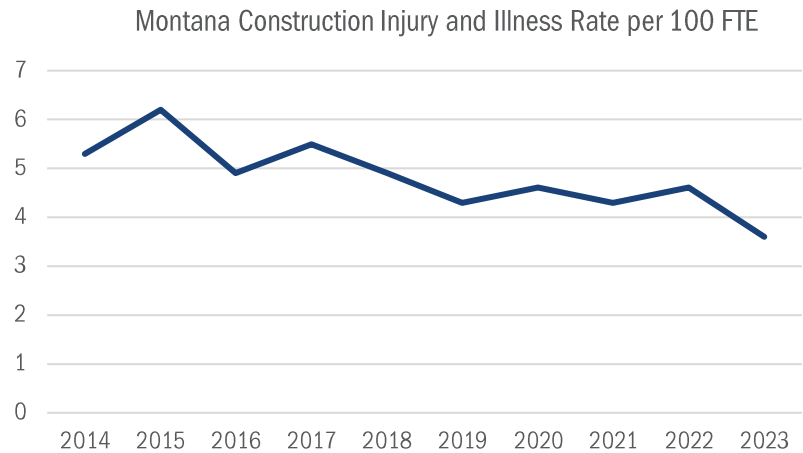
Data on injury severity, as determined by the number of injuries leading to payout of workers' compensation benefits, indicates about 20% of injuries reported by construction workers result in workers taking time away from work to recover. This is slightly above the state average for all industries, but lower than other goods-producing industries such as mining or agriculture.

Types of Injuries to Construction Workers, 2020-2024



Statewide and National Injury Trends

The Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII), performed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) with the help of state researchers, provides additional insights on how construction compares to other industries for safety.⁵ The Montana construction industry reported 3.6 injuries per 100 full-time workers in 2023, similar to the overall rate of injury for Montana but much higher than the national rate for construction workers (2.3 injuries per 100 FTE). However, there is some good news in the SOII data: the Montana construction industry injury rate has improved substantially in recent years.



Improving Safety in Construction

The construction industry has made considerable progress in implementing safe working practices in recent years, but for the injury rate to continue falling, Montana workers and employers need to maintain the focus on safety. Fortunately, many resources exist to promote safety in construction workplaces, including:

- [Montana Employment Standards Division, Safety & Health Consultation Program](#): The Montana Department of Labor & Industry provides free safety training and on-site consultations to any employer in Montana. The program also hosts [SafetyFest](#), a free training series with numerous construction topics along with OSHA 10 training. An in-person SafetyFest will be held in Billings in May 2025 and online training will be provided again in the near future.
- [Occupational Safety & Health Administration](#): OSHA provides oversight and enforcement of workplace safety in private sector businesses for Montana. The agency issues safety standards and provides training and consultation services. It provides specific information and training on topics like falls and construction equipment use as well as guidance on dealing with hazardous working conditions.
- [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health](#): NIOSH is the workplace safety arm of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The agency combines OSHA and BLS data to produce fact sheets on avoiding hazards in the workplace for topics like excavators, dump trucks, and trenches.

By applying these resources, workers in construction can better understand the hazards they face as they build or repair infrastructure around the state and hopefully avoid the costs of accident and injury.

^{1, 2, and 3} [BLS Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#)

⁴ Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Workers' Compensation Administrative Network

⁵ [BLS Injuries, Illnesses, and Fatalities Data](#)

