

# Opportunities and Options: Construction Workers

New schools, government buildings, stadiums and arenas, offices, homes, roads, hospitals, and other structures are coming out of the ground regularly in tiny towns and major metropolitan areas. Being a construction worker is your chance to be involved, literally from the ground up, in projects of all sizes. You can build a new career for yourself as a construction worker.



## Constructing a Career in the Building Industry

If you choose to [work in construction](#), you'll be joining a massive U.S. workforce. About 1.3 million people are employed in the construction labor field, according to 2010 data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. With the housing and commercial building industries improving, construction worker jobs are expected to increase by 25 percent between 2010 and 2020, which is faster the national average for all occupations.

As a construction laborer, you could be self-employed (representing about 23 percent of the workforce, according to the government's data). As a result, you will be responsible for finding your own health insurance, and you may decide to keep working instead of taking vacation days.

If you're employed as construction worker full-time, the annual average salary was \$29,730 in 2011, according to U.S. News & World Report.

When you specialize in certain skills – more than just swinging a hammer – there's the potential to boost your earnings. The construction industry is seeking workers who can bring these and other types of skills to the worksite:

- Electrician
- Plumbing

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If you have earned certifications from industry groups, that also could boost your appeal as a job applicant.

### Inside the Life of a Construction Worker

Some days could be long, with overtime often required to help meet building project deadlines. Construction workers also may work overnight and on weekends, if the project is in an area where daytime traffic cannot be disrupted. U.S. News & World Report finds that these Northeast cities can garner the highest pay for construction workers: Framingham, Mass.; New York City; Leominster, Mass.; Boston, Mass.; and Trenton, N.J.

Construction workers are needed before projects officially break ground, as crews are brought in to remove debris and to get building materials for the construction process ready.

Physical labor is a key part of construction work, from digging trenches to operating equipment. You'll also need to be a team player, as the crew will work together to follow the construction plan and adapt to potential obstacles that come up along the way.

[Working in construction](#) can be a tough job, in terms of the amount of labor and hours required, but you'll get the ultimate satisfaction when the project is complete. That's when you'll see the physical signs of your hard work, and move on to the next job as a construction worker.

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#### About Lori Johnston

Lori Johnston is a Georgia-based freelance writer and former Associated Press reporter. She has contributed to many publications, including The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Atlanta Business Chronicle, and People magazine. A 1995 graduate of the

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