

MEDIA RELEASE
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Unionized Construction Work is Safe Work

Study confirms 'Union Safety Effect' on building trades construction sites

TORONTO, Ont. — A unionized construction job site is a safer job site.

A new study by the Institute for Work and Health has found that lost-time injury claims to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) are 31 per cent lower on unionized building trade construction jobs than they are in a non-union environment. The study, *Updating a Study of the Union Effect on Safety in the ICI Construction Sector*, also found that claims for severe injuries are 29 per cent lower on union job sites.

“The data doesn’t lie, and reaffirms what we have always suspected,” says Robert Bronk, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Construction Secretariat. “Preventable incidents hurt people, reduce productivity and affect worker morale. It is encouraging to see data that assures a unionized job is being done properly and safely by people who are fully trained in what their tasks are.”

The study analyzed WSIB data from more than 50,000 companies representing 1.7 million workers in the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) construction sector between 2012 and 2018. The study is a follow up to a similar analysis completed in 2015 with data up to 2012, with similar conclusions: unionization is associated with lower risks of lost-time claims including both musculoskeletal and the more severe critical injuries.

Furthermore, the updated study has found the “union safety effect” has strengthened over the past five years, when claims from unionized construction workers were 23 per cent lower compared to unrepresented construction workers.

The current study also found that as the size of the company grows, the incidence of claims drops, with 36 per cent fewer claims in unionized companies with more than 50 employees — and the bigger firms tend to be unionized.

“Unionization in ICI construction results in safer workplaces,” says Patrick Dillon, Business Manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. “Building trades unions insist on a higher level of construction trades training, which results in safer workplace practices, as well as educating tradespeople to recognize unsafe working conditions. This

results in a healthier and safer workplace and provides confidence that a unionized workforce will get a job completed on time, on budget and, most importantly, safely.”

While the researchers did not investigate why unionized workers are filing fewer WSIB claims, they do note that ICI building trades unions and their contractor partners make significant investments in health and safety training and that unionized building trades employees are more likely to report unsafe working conditions, refuse unsafe work and ensure enforcement where needed.

Building trades union work sites also tend to employ more registered apprentices and have higher journey-person-to-apprentice ratios according to their trade’s respective collective agreement. Building trades union signatory contractors also tend to have less worker turnover and longer job tenure.

“Strong partnerships make for safer workplaces,” says Wayne Peterson, Executive Director of the Construction Employers Coordinating Council of Ontario. “The ICI building trades construction sector benefits greatly from the joint partnerships between our contractors and their unions. This collaborative working relationship has made the unionized building trades construction sector a safety leader in the construction industry.”

Read a full version of the research report [here](#).

For more information on the OCS, please visit www.iciconstruction.com. Follow the OCS on Twitter [@OntConstSec](https://twitter.com/OntConstSec).

About the Ontario Construction Secretariat:

The Ontario Construction Secretariat was formed in 1993 as a joint labour/management organization representing 25 unionized construction trades and their contractor partners in Ontario's Industrial, Commercial and Institutional construction sector. The OCS is a respected organization that undertakes research that enhances the well-being of the industry, and provides advice and guidance on public policy matters related to the industry.

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