Department of Labor & Industries (L&I): An Overview

L&I’s mission is to keep Washington safe and working. Its five goals are:
1. Make workplaces safe
2. Help injured workers heal and return to work
3. Make it easy to do business with L&I
4. Help honest workers and businesses by cracking down on the dishonest ones
5. Ensure L&I is an employer of choice

What L&I does
L&I protects the safety, health, and security of Washington’s workers and citizens. The agency:

- Enforces and helps employers comply with workplace safety and health standards
- Administers Washington’s workers’ compensation system
- Enforces laws about wages, working conditions, and child labor
- Licenses contractors and inspects and regulates their work

Safety and health standards
L&I’s Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) administers the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA). WISHA requires all Washington State employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace and comply with workplace safety and health rules. Washington is one of 27 states that have their own workplace safety and health programs. In other states, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration enforces safety and health requirements.

DOSH uses three main tools to administer WISHA and prevent workplace injuries:

- **Education**: DOSH develops workplace safety training tools and online resources for employers and workers. These include a large library of videos and online courses on dozens of topics. DOSH also conducts hundreds of workshops around the state each year to teach employers how to eliminate workplace hazards. The DOSH website offering education and training materials and workshop schedules gets an average of 1.5 million views per month.
- **Consultations**: DOSH offers free on-site workplace safety or risk management consultations for employers. Consultations are confidential and employers are not penalized for any violations that are found, although they must correct any serious hazards. In FY 2013, DOSH completed over 2,400 consultations.
- **Enforcement**: DOSH responds to complaints about workplace hazards, and investigates work-related hospitalizations and deaths. In FY 2013, DOSH completed over 4,600 compliance inspections.

L&I also conducts numerous research, monitoring, and demonstration projects on workplace health and safety.
Workers’ compensation
L&I makes sure workers who are injured or become ill on the job receive the proper benefits. The agency works closely with doctors, employers, and counselors to help severely injured employees heal and return to work as quickly and smoothly as possible. Washington’s workers’ compensation system provides benefits to workers who are injured on the job or who suffer from an occupational disease. It pays for medical treatment and partial wage replacement, and provides permanent disability benefits. For eligible workers, training for a new job or occupation is also provided.

Employers and workers pay premiums to L&I for workers’ compensation coverage in case workers are injured or become ill on the job. L&I invests these premiums to maximize the amount of funds available. L&I also regulates large employers that qualify to “self-insure” by providing their own workers’ compensation insurance.

Wages, working conditions, and child labor laws
L&I protects workers by enforcing laws about wages, working conditions, and child labor. This includes ensuring that employers:

- Pay legally required wages
- Provide safe working conditions
- Assure rests and meal breaks
- Allow appropriate leave
- Follow rules about minor workers’ age, restrictions on work hours, equipment use, and training

Contractor requirements
L&I protects the public by:

- Inspecting electrical work, boilers, elevators, and manufactured homes
- Testing and licensing electricians
- Certifying plumbers
- Issuing operating permits for amusement rides
- Registering construction contractors, requiring them to be insured and bonded
- Providing easy-to-use online information about registered contractors

Need more information?
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