

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT:

Women represent an untapped source of skilled labor for the construction industry. Yet today, women make up just 4% of the craft labor force. With persistent labor shortages, the industry could do even more to make women feel safe and welcome on construction jobsites. Construction is a male dominated industry, and many aspects of construction culture can erode a sense of belonging and create an unsafe environment for women. This is particularly true on jobsites where behavior (harassment, bullying, sexual harassment), language, symbols, and images can demean women making them question if construction is a viable career path. There are many actions jobsite leaders can take to make women feel safe and welcome on jobsites. Sustained attention to these issues by construction companies will help recruit and retain female craft workers while demonstrating commitment to a respectful workplace for everyone.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET:

A respectful workplace is one in which everyone, including women, are valued, treated with dignity, and offered the same opportunities for training, learning, and advancement. Use this worksheet to track your actions and ensure you support the safety and wellbeing of female colleagues. Remember to regularly review the essential policies, practices, and daily actions required to ensure a welcoming and safe environment for women and all workers on construction jobsites.

HARASSMENT

Approximately 25% of all tradeswomen report frequent or constant harassment (including sexual harassment). A welcoming workplace does not tolerate jobsite harassment.

As a jobsite leader, it is your responsibility to ensure that inappropriate behavior such as harassment is not tolerated on the jobsite and that tradeswomen feel safe and welcome. If and when harassment occurs, crew members need to know how to report it and know they will not experience any retaliation for speaking up. Here are some actions you can take to create a more respectful workplace.

YOU CAN

- Require that all crew members read and sign the company Workplace Fairness/Anti-Harassment Policies and Code of Conduct and understand the repercussions for harassment.
- Establish an incident reporting system to encourage reporting of harassment, without fear of retaliation, honoring crew members' rights to privacy.
- Conduct regular bystander intervention training as part of safety training; address harassment as a safety issue!



DISCRIMINATION

Women can't advance in construction if they aren't given opportunities to learn their craft and hone skills. A welcoming workplace ensures that tradeswomen are mentored appropriately and given job tasks that advance their knowledge and skill.

In a hostile work environment, supervisors and co-workers may withhold training, assistance, safety information, or equipment from tradeswomen. Discriminating against tradeswomen in these ways increases safety hazards on the jobsite and contributes to psychological distress. Here are some actions you can take to create a more respectful workplace.

YOU CAN

- Require that all crew members read and sign the company Workplace Fairness/Anti-Harassment Policies and Code of Conduct and understand the repercussions for discriminatory behavior. You might need to review EEOC policies in your state, so you are fully informed about unlawful discriminatory practices.
- Emphasize the importance of mentoring and skill development for all new workers in daily huddles and weekly safety meetings.
- If you see women relegated to mundane tasks repeatedly, intervene and find out what's going on.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Ill-fitting PPE affects an estimated 80% of tradeswomen. Welcoming workplaces demonstrate their commitment to women's safety and comfort by providing PPE that fits this population and the individual workers.

Per OSHA regulation, construction companies are now required to provide proper fitting PPE considering body types. Smaller-framed construction workers are put at risk when safety glasses slip off, and gloves or clothing get caught in machines. Here are some actions you can take to create a more respectful workplace.

YOU CAN

- Show tradeswomen you care about their safety and comfort by providing proper fitting PPE. Make sure your jobsite stocks a wide range of PPE sizes and ask tradeswomen if the available equipment fits them well.
- Encourage your company to source PPE from manufacturers who specialize in women's PPE. If needed, contact them to ensure selection of the equipment fits different body sizes.



BATHROOMS, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

Respectful workplaces provide tradeswomen with adequate bathrooms that are both accessible and sanitary.

Surveys of women in construction report that implementation of sanitary, gender-friendly bathrooms are an important way of demonstrating respect and creating a healthy work environment. Women who work on projects without sanitary and accessible bathrooms report drinking less water at work to avoid the bathrooms – increasing risk of heat stress and medical issues. Here are some actions you can take to create a more respectful workplace.

YOU CAN

- Designate women-only toilets (1 toilet per 10 women)
- Provide bathrooms with running water
- Provide feminine hygiene products
- Ensure facilities are adequately lit
- Keep facilities adequately stocked with toilet seat covers and toilet paper
- Provide hand washing stations near portable toilet clusters (for everyone)
- Remove offensive graffiti from bathrooms and ensure your crew understands this is considered an inappropriate behavior that you won't tolerate



ACCOMMODATIONS FOR NURSING MOTHERS

Welcoming tradeswomen includes creating the time and the space nursing mothers need to express breast milk. Federal law requires employers to provide reasonable break time and a private, non-bathroom space for nursing mothers. Here are some actions you can take to create a more respectful workplace.

YOU CAN

- Provide flexible, longer, or more frequent breaks to nursing mothers
- Provide private, non-bathroom space to express milk. Ensure the space is clean, sanitary, and ideally near running water for washing parts.
- Nursing mothers must be allowed to bring a cooler or other way to refrigerate expressed milk.
- Implement a written policy, educate the team on its importance, and proactively ask nursing workers what they need rather than waiting for them to request accommodation.
- Ensure nursing mothers are not experiencing harassing or discriminatory behaviors by co-workers.



Sources: CPWR PPE for Women in Construction; Chicago Women in Trades, Preventing and Addressing Sexual Harassment; Women's Institute for Policy Studies, Survey of Tradeswomen.

NOTES: