

Some professions carry a higher risk of injury and illness, making workers in some industries more prone to accidents. In North Carolina, the state's [workers' compensation](#) system protects those who work in dangerous [industries](#). This includes financial support if they become injured or suffer work-related illnesses. Below, our Durham workers' compensation attorney briefly examines the most dangerous jobs in North Carolina, the types of injuries these occupations often result in, and the workers' compensation rights of those who suffer a work-related injury.

## The Most Dangerous Jobs in North Carolina

North Carolina has a diverse economy, with important sectors ranging from agriculture to manufacturing and from construction to transport. While these sectors are invaluable for the state's economy, they are often very dangerous. In fact, North Carolina's most hazardous jobs are usually found in industries that require working with heavy machinery, dangerous substances, or hard physical labor.

### Construction Workers

Construction is one of the most dangerous jobs in North Carolina and throughout the United States. [Construction workers](#) are often exposed to various hazards on worksites, including falls from heights, strikes from swinging objects, and injuries from heavy machines or heavy equipment.

Some common construction-related injuries include:

- Falls from ladders, scaffolding, or roofs
- Injuries from collapsing structures or trenches
- Electrocution from contact with power lines or electrical equipment
- Being struck by heavy objects or machinery
- Repetitive strain injuries due to heavy lifting or repetitive tasks

### Agricultural Workers

Agriculture, particularly in the eastern part of North Carolina, can also be a dangerous occupation. Farming and livestock production is the mainstay of the economy in this region. However, agricultural workers are at serious risk of exposure to pesticides and other chemicals, accidents involving heavy machinery such as tractors, and injuries from handling livestock.

Common agricultural-related injuries include:

- Injuries from farm machinery (tractor rollovers, equipment malfunctions)
- Pesticide exposure leading to respiratory issues, skin irritation, or poisoning
- Injuries from handling livestock (kicks, bites, or trampling)
- Heat-related illnesses from working long hours in hot, humid conditions
- Musculoskeletal injuries from repetitive tasks like planting, harvesting, or lifting

## Transportation and Delivery Drivers

The mere nature of work for truck drivers, delivery drivers, and other transportation workers puts them in the category of high-risk workers. Many of these workers drive long hours, increasing the likelihood of [vehicle accidents](#) (especially when driving large commercial trucks). Drivers also experience physical strain when loading and unloading cargo, and they often sustain repetitive motion injuries from driving for hours on end.

Transportation-related injuries may include:

- Injuries from vehicle accidents (whiplash, fractures, traumatic brain injuries)
- Musculoskeletal injuries from repetitive motion or prolonged sitting
- Injuries related to loading and unloading cargo (lifting-related strains or sprains)
- Fatigue-related accidents due to long hours or insufficient breaks

## Manufacturing Workers

North Carolina has a robust manufacturing sector, including industries like textiles, food processing, and machinery production. Manufacturing workers often work with heavy machinery, chemicals, and hazardous materials, which can lead to serious injuries if safety protocols are not followed. Accidents in manufacturing facilities can result from equipment malfunctions, improper machine guarding, or lack of proper training.

Common manufacturing-related injuries include:

- Injuries from machinery (crush injuries, amputations, cuts)
- Chemical exposure leading to respiratory issues or skin burns
- Repetitive strain injuries from assembly line work
- Hearing loss due to prolonged exposure to loud machinery
- Injuries from slips, trips, or falls on factory floors

## Healthcare Workers

There are certain risks specific to nurses, doctors, and caregivers. Healthcare workers face multiple hazards due to the fast-paced nature of hospitals and healthcare facilities. For example, nurses and caregivers are exposed to disease, hazardous drugs and chemicals, and physically demanding tasks such as lifting or moving patients. As a result, they are at risk for musculoskeletal injuries.

Some of the more common healthcare-related injuries include:

- Exposure to infectious diseases (such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, or COVID-19)
- Injuries from lifting or moving patients (back, neck, and shoulder injuries)
- Needlestick injuries or exposure to hazardous medications
- Assault or violence from patients or others in the workplace
- Slips, trips, and falls in hospital or clinic settings

## Workers' Compensation Rights in North Carolina

Those who are injured on the job or become ill as a direct result of their employment are entitled to workers' compensation benefits. The North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act requires employers to provide medical and financial benefits to an employee injured or disabled by a work-related injury or disease. The system is a no-fault system, meaning that an injured worker does not have to prove negligence on the employer's part to receive the needed medical care and compensation.

## Eligibility for Workers' Compensation

Most employers in North Carolina with three or more employees are required to carry workers' compensation insurance. Employees in practically every industry are eligible, including full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees. The same rules may not cover Independent contractors, so determining employment status is important when filing a claim.

To be eligible for workers' compensation benefits, the injury or illness must be directly related to the worker's job duties. This includes both acute injuries from a specific accident and occupational diseases that develop over time, such as repetitive strain injuries or illnesses due to exposure to hazardous substances.

Some examples of compensable work-related injuries include:

- An injury sustained in a fall from scaffolding at a construction site
- A back injury caused by lifting a patient in a healthcare setting
- A chemical burn resulting from exposure to toxic substances in a manufacturing plant
- A repetitive strain injury caused by repetitive motions on an assembly line

## Types of Workers' Compensation Benefits

North Carolina law may allow injured workers to receive a wide range of benefits, depending on the nature and severity of their injury.

### Medical Benefits

Workers' compensation provides medical care for all reasonable and necessary treatment related to the work injury – whether it be doctor's visits, in-patient hospital care, surgery, prescription drugs, rehabilitation, physical therapy, special equipment, or any other treatment that a doctor has prescribed as necessary. Plus, workers can be reimbursed for mileage to and from medical appointments.

### Temporary Total Disability (TTD) Benefits

If a worker cannot return to work while recovering from a work injury, he or she could be entitled to Temporary Total Disability (TTD) benefits. These benefits pay for wage replacement, usually calculated at two-thirds of the worker's average weekly wage, up to a maximum statutory amount. TTD benefits continue until the worker can return to work or until she reaches maximum medical improvement (MMI).

## Temporary Partial Disability (TPD) Benefits

However, a worker who returns to work but cannot perform his or her regular tasks or must work fewer hours than before because of the injury can receive Temporary Partial Disability (TPD) benefits. TPD benefits recipients are compensated for the difference between their pre-injury wages and their reduced earnings during the recovery period.

## Permanent Partial Disability (PPD) Benefits

If a worker's injury results in permanent impairment but does not completely prevent them from working, they may be entitled to Permanent Partial Disability (PPD) benefits. The amount of PPD benefits is determined based on the nature and severity of the impairment, as well as the affected body part. North Carolina uses a schedule of injuries to calculate PPD benefits for specific body parts, such as hands, feet, and legs.

## Permanent Total Disability (PTD) Benefits

For workers whose injuries are so serious that they will never be able to work again, the benefits are PTD—Permanent Total Disability—which provides wage replacement for the rest of the worker's life.

## Death Benefits

If a worker is killed in a job-related injury or illness, the worker's dependents may be able to get death benefits through workers' compensation, which can include funeral and burial expenses and wage replacement benefits for surviving dependents.

## Filing a Workers' Compensation Claim in North Carolina

To receive workers' compensation benefits, injured workers must take the following steps to file their claim:

1. Reporting the Injury

The worker is required to notify the employer of the injury or illness as soon as possible but no later than 30 days after the date of the accident or 30 days after the date of the diagnosis of a work-related occupational disease. If a worker fails to report his or her injury or illness within 30 days of the accident or diagnosis of the work-related illness, the claim for benefits may be denied.

## 2. Seeking Medical Treatment

In North Carolina, employers and their insurance carriers can direct an injured worker's medical care. This means the worker must see a doctor authorized by the employer's workers' compensation insurance company. However, workers can request a second opinion or additional treatment if they disagree with the recommended course of care.

## 3. Filing a Claim with the North Carolina Industrial Commission (NCIC)

The worker should not only notify the employer of the injury but also submit a Form 18 to the North Carolina Industrial Commission (NCIC) within two years of the injury or the date of the diagnosis of a work-related illness.

## Disputes and Appeals

If the workers' compensation claim is denied or if a dispute arises as to the amount of benefits, the worker has the right to file an appeal. This begins with a mediation conference and is followed by a hearing before the North Carolina Industrial Commission, and can, if necessary, go all the way up to the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

## Speak With a Knowledgeable Durham Workers' Compensation Attorney Today

Injury or illness due to the nature of the work is a reality for many workers in North Carolina, especially those employed in construction, agriculture, transportation, and manufacturing. These workers are covered under the state's workers' compensation, a system designed to compensate these workers when they are injured on the job.

Injured workers have certain rights that will enable them to obtain the desired medical care and compensation. They are entitled to certain benefits but must comply with the established procedures to receive them. If you have been hurt on the job and have questions or concerns about your rights, don't go it alone—[speak to a skilled Durham workers' compensation attorney](#) immediately.