

Construction Labor Career Guide

A guide for construction managers, first-line supervisors of construction trades and extraction workers, cement masons and concrete finishers, construction laborers, operating engineers and other construction equipment operators, roofers, cabinetmakers and bench carpenters.



Finding Your Way to a Career: Construction Labor

Construction laborers are the backbone of each construction job site. Laborers are highly skilled workers that carry out essential tasks for construction projects. The pathway can be physically demanding as laborers work with power tools, carry materials, and operate power machinery. Laborers play a crucial role in setting the foundation for successful projects by safely and effectively carrying out their tasks. All these roles are under the supervision of a front-line supervisor, typically known as a foreman.

How to use this document to learn more.

As one of the Top 100 Hot Jobs for 2022, laborer is a promising occupation for job seekers in West Michigan. To find out if this might be a good career choice for you, use this Career Map to examine:

- Who might enjoy this kind of work.
- Qualifications needed in this career field.
- Growth potential and levels of pay.
- Valuable skills for this type of work.
- Common tools and technology used in this work.
- Occupations, responsibilities, and other job titles.

This information is drawn from national data and insights from West Michigan employers. It is meant as a starting point for job seekers and career coaches to work together in the exploration of meaningful and fulfilling careers.



Exploring Occupations in Construction Labor

Construction laborers, also known as “field employees,” are the boots on the ground for each construction project. Laborers generally use their hands to complete a variety of tasks. These tasks may include operating construction equipment, loading or unloading materials, preparation of job sites, surveying, and putting together temporary structures.

The Path to Success

Who might enjoy this type of work?

People who work in the laborer field tend to enjoy:

- Practical, hands-on problem solving.
- Working with real world materials like wood, tools, and machinery.
- Working with projects, starting and carrying out tasks that provide solutions.
- Being the decision maker while leading a group of people.
- Following set procedures and routines.
- Working with data and details more than with ideas.
- Having a clear line of authority to follow.

People who do well in this work generally perform well in such areas as:

- Responsibility
- Achievement
- Teamwork
- Adaptability
- Information skills

Qualifications needed in this career field.

Sample certifications include:

Construction Managers sample credentials: project management professional (PMP) certification, Bachelor of Science in business, American Concrete Institute (ACI) certification

First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers sample credentials: commercial driver’s license (CDL), operator certification

Construction Laborers sample credentials: commercial driver’s license (CDL), forklift operator certification, operator certification.

Operating engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators sample credentials: commercial driver’s license (CDL), operator certification.

Growth potential.

In the West Michigan counties of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa, there were 11,307 laborers jobs in 2020. That number is projected to grow by at least 6% to 11,945 by 2025.

Valuable skills for this type of work.

Tasks and functions performed by laborers include:

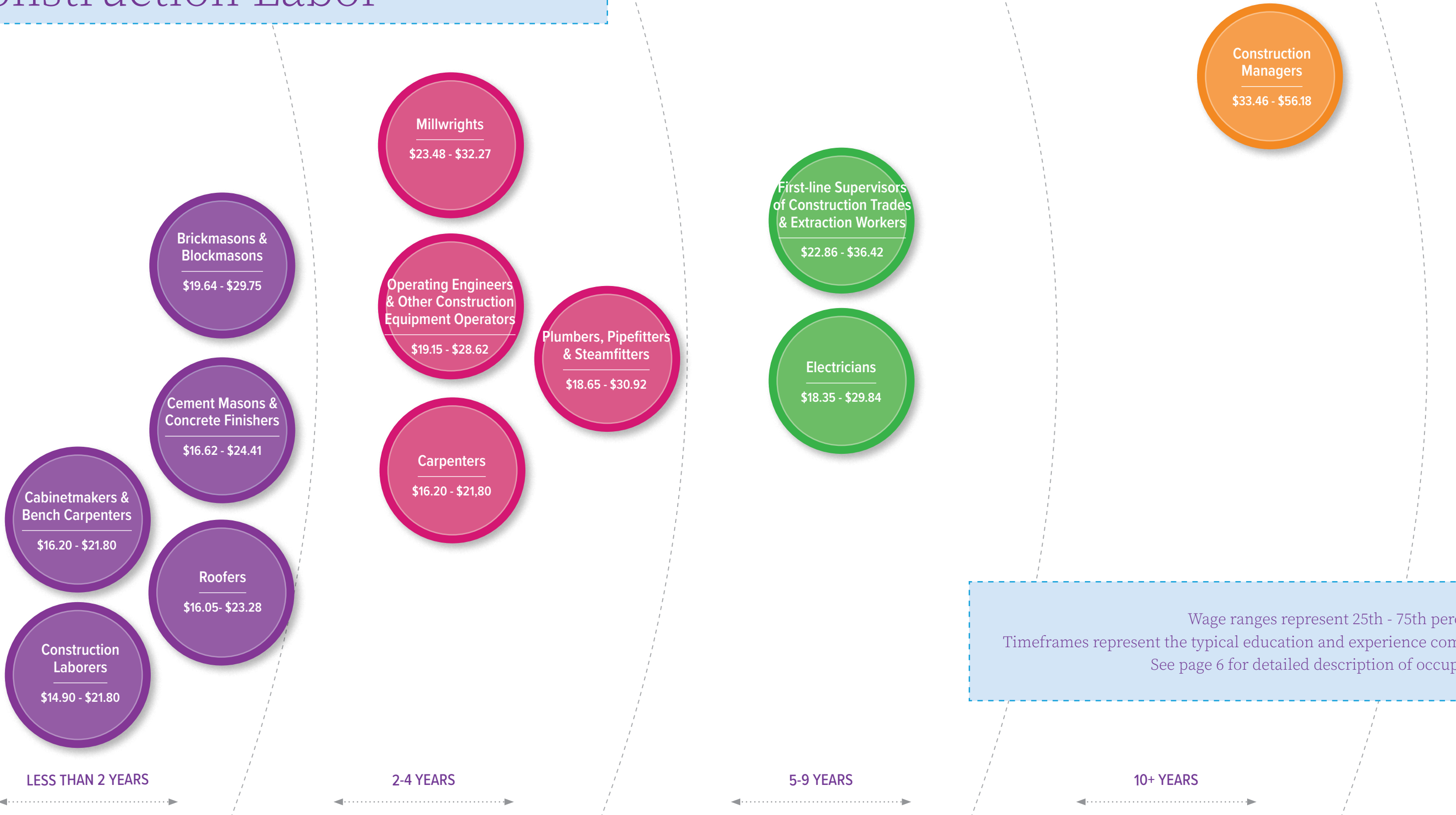
- Getting information.
- Inspecting equipment, structures, or material.
- Making decisions and solving problems.
- Monitoring processes, materials, or surroundings.
- Identifying objects, actions, and events.

Common tools and technology used in this work.

Tools: hammers, jacks, power drills, saws, skid steers

Technology: computer-aided design software, spreadsheet software, calendar and scheduling software.

Mapping a Career: Construction Labor



Wage ranges represent 25th - 75th percentile.
Timeframes represent the typical education and experience combined.
See page 6 for detailed description of occupations.

Construction Labor: A Field Guide

Occupations, responsibilities and other job titles.

Construction Managers

Plan, direct, or coordinate, usually through subordinate supervisory personnel, activities concerned with the construction and maintenance of structures, facilities, and systems. Participate in the conceptual development of a construction project and oversee its organization, scheduling, budgeting, and implementation. Includes managers in specialized construction fields, such as carpentry or plumbing.

Examples of locally used job titles: concrete foreman, construction area manager, construction foreman, construction manager, construction services manager, construction superintendent, job superintendent.

First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers

These individuals directly supervise and coordinate activities of construction or extraction workers.

Examples of locally used job titles: coal mine production foreman, construction foreman, construction supervisor, electrical supervisor, field operations supervisor, field supervisor, insulation foreman, roustabout field supervisor, sheet metal foreman, site superintendent.

Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers

These individuals smooth and finish surfaces of poured concrete, such as floors, walks, sidewalks, roads, or curbs using a variety of hand and power tools. Align forms for sidewalks, curbs, or gutters; patch voids; and use saws to cut expansion joints.

Examples of locally used job titles: cement finisher, cement mason, concrete finisher, concrete mason, finisher, mason.

Construction Laborers

Construction laborers perform tasks involving physical labor at construction sites. May operate hand and power tools of all types: air hammers, earth tampers, cement mixers, small mechanical hoists, surveying and measuring equipment, and a variety of other equipment and instruments. May clean and prepare sites, dig trenches, set braces to support the sides of

excavations, erect scaffolding, and clean up rubble, debris, and other waste materials. May assist other craft workers.

Examples of locally used job titles: bituminous asphalt technician, construction laborer, construction worker, drop crew laborer, equipment operator, form setter, post framer, scaffolding operator, site work laborer, toolman.

Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators

These individuals operate one or several types of power construction equipment, such as motor graders, bulldozers, scrapers, compressors, pumps, derricks, shovels, tractors, or front-end loaders to excavate, move, and grade earth, erect structures, or pour concrete or other hard surface pavement. May repair and maintain equipment in addition to other duties.

Examples of locally used job titles: backhoe operator, engineering equipment operator, equipment operator, forklift operator, heavy equipment operator, hot mix asphalt operator, machine operator, motor grader operator, operating engineer, track hoe operator.

Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers

Roofers cover roofs of structures with shingles, slate, asphalt, aluminum, wood, or related materials. May spray roofs, sidings, and walls with material to bind, seal, insulate, or soundproof sections of structures.

Examples of locally used job titles: commercial roofer, industrial roofer, metal roofing mechanic, residential roofer, roof mechanic, roof service technician, roofer, roofing technician, sheet metal roofer.

Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters

These individuals cut, shape, and assemble wooden articles or set up and operate a variety of woodworking machines, such as power saws, jointers, and mortisers to surface, cut, or shape lumber or to fabricate parts for wood products.

Examples of locally used job titles: cabinet assembler, cabinet builder, cabinet installer, cabinetmaker, double end tenon operator, frame builder, framer, woodworker.



West Michigan Works! is part of the statewide Michigan Works! system and the workforce development agency in West Michigan. We serve the employers and job seekers of Allegan, Barry, Ionia, Kent, Montcalm, Muskegon and Ottawa counties.

We partner with employers, educators, economic developers and community organizations to create a qualified workforce that meets our region's current and future talent needs and fuels our shared economic future.

Learn more at: <https://www.westmiworks.org/>



CareerPoint helps students and job seekers find their place in the world of work by matching interests and abilities with training, support, and meaningful and rewarding careers.

By providing training and tools, CareerPoint supports the workforce professionals who help people navigate the West Michigan job market.

CareerPoint promotes evidence-based coaching to help students and job seekers discover and follow pathways to rewarding careers. This model follows seven steps to each participant's success.

Learn more at: <https://talnetcareerpoint.org/>