



## STUDY ON HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

### Summary of Findings

This fact sheet presents findings from the Safety and Health Empowerment for Women in Trades (SHEWT) study, a collaboration between the University of Washington and Washington Women in Trades. The study used focus groups and surveys with women and men working in the trades in Washington State to better understand the health and safety risks affecting tradeswomen at work. Below are the top risks identified by 25 focus group participants and key survey results.

### Common Themes Raised in Focus Groups

#### Health & Injury Risks

Dangerous work environment  
 Inadequate bathrooms  
 Chronic injuries

#### Social/Stress Risks

Coworker acceptance of risk  
 Hazing  
 Job insecurity  
 Management prioritizing production over safety  
 No paid sick leave  
 Macho culture

#### Women-Specific Risks

Inadequate PPE  
 Physical limitations  
 Sexual harassment  
 Gender discrimination and unequal training  
 Overcompensation due to constantly proving self  
 Tokenism  
 Poor work/life balance  
 Fear of layoff for reporting safety concerns  
 Lack of support

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### What Workers Had to Say

“I think that just being a woman you have a lot of pressure to do things that are not the healthiest to keep up with the young 27-year-old guys.”

—*Journeywoman laborer*

“It’s always hard to break into a group. And there’s a certain amount of...hazing, just pulling tricks on the new person that happens.”

—*Journeyman carpenter*

“You just gotta be mindful about [electricity]. It doesn’t care what gender you are.”

—*Journeywoman electrician*

“It’s almost like you have to prove—as a woman—you have to prove yourself 10 fold before somebody will actually give you the respect.”

—*Journeywoman laborer*

“I think I’ve had guys purposely tell me something that wasn’t true, which could have jeopardized my safety. So I guess, sabotage is sometimes a threat...It falls back into the hostile work environment of the guys who don’t want you there. And therefore they’ll set you up to fail.”

—*Journeywoman electrician*

“And if you ask for that [handwashing station], which you’re also entitled to, you’re on that layoff next week too.”

—*Journeywoman electrician*

“I think the trades is a white man’s industry. And so there’s a comfort level with white men to be with white men and to put white men under their wings. And so I think women and people of color and other minorities are at a disadvantage.”

—*Retired electrician*

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