

Tools for Success - Chapter 1: Nice Work if You Can Get It

Getting Hired in the Trades

The construction industry is unique in many ways, including the transitory nature of the workforce. Weather, seasonal challenges, and the completion of a project all impact the industry's workers. Both men and women working in the trades look for work much more often than other kinds of workers because we are laid off when a job finishes or the season changes. Working regularly is critical though, because we have to support our families and because we need to work a certain number of hours to progress through our apprenticeship programs. Tradeswomen, unfortunately, look for work more often than tradesmen, for this reason: we are very likely to encounter discrimination in hiring and in layoffs. We need to work to remedy this discrimination through advocacy and having a good understanding at how the industry works.

Unless you're a member of union that handles all the job referrals for its members, or at least its apprentices, you're going to have to find most of your work on your own. Here are some suggestions for doing it well.

Prepare a Resume

Though you won't always need one, resumes are increasingly important for the trades as they are for most other occupations. Resumes should include:

- 1) Your trade and union local #
- 2) A summary of your relevant qualifications, be realistic and include only those skills in which you have some work experience and/or training.
- 3) A list of past jobs beginning with the most recent jobs, and going back to include all related work. For each job list the name, address and phone number of someone who can give you a reference. If you are a new tradeswoman, you should include some or all of your unrelated employment experience and emphasize transferrable skills.
- 4) A list of relevant training and education, including certifications.
- 5) A list of achievements, volunteer work and hobbies - this can include groups you have worked with (church, school, community, etc.) and any other activities that show your energy level, commitment and experience.
- 6) Three personal references, with mail and email addresses, phone numbers and relationship (former supervisor, instructor etc.)

Find Out Where the Jobs Are

- 1) Look for jobs on city, state or federal projects. The contractors on these projects should be looking for women to meet affirmative action goals. Typical government projects are

construction and renovation of roads, bridges, schools, government office buildings, hospitals, libraries and other public facilities.

- 2) Contact your local tradeswomen's support organization and other nonprofit organizations that connect workers to construction employment. A list of tradeswomen's organization can be found at: <http://chicagowomenintrades2.org/resources-3/tradeswomens-organizations/>
- 3) Call your apprentice coordinator or union business agent for job leads. Check in regularly - at least every two weeks.
- 4) Call contractors directly (if permissible by your union hall and/or apprenticeship program). Ask to speak with the person in charge of equal Employment Opportunity and send your resume to this person.
- 5) Keep informed about new job sites by traveling around you area. Read newspapers and construction publications; contractors in Chicago, for example, publish a weekly newsletter called the dodge report which lists all new construction in the area. Search on line, many state and city agencies, such as the Public Buildings commission, identify ongoing or upcoming projects.
- 6) Develop a network of people who can help you find jobs. Call co-workers, former supervisors and form employers frequently.
- 7) Attend union meetings and volunteer for union events and activities.
- 8) Attend company-sponsored meetings, events and picnics. Get to know the people who can help you find work.

Try these suggestions as you apply for jobs:

Traditionally, looking for work in the construction industry has been centered around visiting construction sites, though more and more the process is shifting to on-line and other applications processes. If you do go on site, here are some tips to keep in mind.

- 1) Some women have had success going with another woman to apply for jobs.
 - If parking is hard to find, one of you can drive around the block while the other makes inquires.
 - If you're both hired you can support each other on the site.
- 2) Arrive early 45 minutes before the start of the workday, dressed for work, with your tools, lunch, PPE (hardhat, safety vest, safety glasses and gloves).
- 3) Tell the foreman, steward or contractor:
 - what kind of work you want, and
 - your qualifications and experience
- 4) Many tradeswomen recommend taking copies of all required documentation, including:
 - Resume
 - Union card and identification
 - Any certifications you have earned

5) If you're not hired

- Focus on making as strong a positive impression as possible.
- Ask to fill out an application for future work. If they are not taking applications or keeping other written records, leave you resume (ask them to stamp the date on it first).
- In your notebook, record the name of the company, the name of the person you talked to and what was said, the location of the site and the date.

6) Even if you're not hired right away, be persistent!

- ask about work at other sites
- ask when they will be hiring
- go back again and follow up on any timelines they give you

7) If you think you are experiencing discrimination, see Chapter "When Push Comes to Shove"

Ideas from Experienced Tradeswomen

"I have never ever been hired from filling out an application online. It does help to have a resume to provide to a foreman/Superintendent/owner as I find them on site. My process goes typically like this: we generally know when layoff is approaching. We start calling fellow/sister bricklayers and see where the work is. As work get slow or I get laid off I send out a mass text to any and all connections that would lead to work or work leads. I call my business agents and union representatives as well as friendly BAs and reps from another local). Then I go to job sites and follow up on leads. I will stop by multiple jobsites, and intentionally hit as many jobs run by the same masonry contractor. My intention being that they talk about me and to spark interest in inquiring about who I am and my work rep. This technique is typically the most successful for me, above handing out resumes." Vanessa Casillas, Bricklayer

"Go to union meetings. Volunteer at Union events. Write thank you notes to everyone you work with and everyone you talk to." Anne Kahle, Pipefitter

"I know that it's a part of construction culture that many people won't ever know about unless you spell it out for them. Being this aggressive doesn't happen in white collar careers and even some trades. It's also important for apprentices to understand there will be rejection and it will happen several times before you get hired. It can be really hard to take blow after blow and still show up smiling and giving your best impression of yourself. It takes a lot of emotional strength to want to head out to random jobsites knowing you will be rejected. And still do it day after day until you find a job. No one talks about that part of it." Vanessa Casillas, Bricklayer

Tools for Success - Chapter 2: Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

The trades are interesting and pay well because the work is not simple, nor easy. It requires training, hard work and determination. Most union workers are trained through union registered apprenticeship programs, which last between two and five years, depending on the skills required. During this time, apprentices get classroom training provided at the school, which is typically sponsored and paid for by the union and its employers, through the Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, or JATC. Classroom training is complemented by on-the-job training (also referred to as OJT) which is provided by employers which have an agreement with the unions (also called signatory contractors).

As training advances and classroom and work hour benchmarks are met, the apprentice receives progressively higher wages commensurate with their increasing value and experience. At the end of the apprenticeship, a worker becomes a journey-level tradesperson, earning the same pay rate as every other journey worker in their trade in that region. Wages are negotiated by the unions and the industry associations.

Though classroom training can be challenging for tradeswomen, particularly if they are the only woman in their class, they are in the same classroom with the other apprentices and have the same access to educational resources.

On-the-job training, however is often unequal and remains one of the most frequently cited barriers women face to successful careers in the trades. Apprentices are supposed to work with a journey-level worker on a series of increasingly difficult tasks as part of the required on-the-job training (OJT) hours. Many women, however, find instead that they are assigned to routine, unskilled tasks like cleaning up or sorting tools while male apprentices are learning real skills, knowledge and abilities on the jobsite. As a result, some women finish their apprenticeships without gaining the necessary skills or experience that achievement represents, which can lead to problems in obtaining and retaining employment.

Be Aware of the Work You're Assigned To

All apprentices, whether male or female, do repetitive, entry-level work like going for coffee, sorting tools and cleaning. However, you will want to be aware if you're not receiving all of the experience and opportunities afforded to your male counterparts. Is your training different from the other apprentices' training? Are all the apprentices going for coffee, or are you the only one? Are you getting the same variety of assignments everyone else is? Keep good records of your assignments in a notebook you keep in your lunchbox or pocket.

If you feel that you are not getting sufficient training, you can speak to the supervisor on the site, to the foreperson's superior, or to the person who hired you. You can also speak to your

apprenticeship coordinator or business agent as well. Be assertive. Explain your position: "Joe started when I started, but he's welding and I'm not." Ask for a different assignment or the training partner you want. Follow up these conversations with letters asking for the same thing and keep copies of the letters.

Assume Some Responsibility for Your Training

The Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee should make sure that you are being trained properly but in reality, they rarely have the staff time or the authority to effectively monitor and manage the job assignments of their apprentices. To ensure that you are receiving adequate training, you may have to take some steps on your own. Here are some suggestions.

- 1) Find out what is included in the training curriculum and make sure you are being trained in every area.
- 2) Set goals for yourself. Goals for carpenters might be: By May, I will be able to frame a doorway without assistance. By June, I will be able to draw a plan for a simple staircase.
- 3) Team up with other tradeswomen to study and practice skills. Some apprentices form study groups and work together throughout their apprenticeship.
- 4) If you find a journey level person who is willing to teach you, ask to be his or her partner.
- 5) Find a more experience mentor outside of work who can help you build skills and negotiate the job site.
- 6) Be aware of other people's work. You can watch what other tradespeople are doing even if you're sweeping up or sorting tools.
- 7) Practice your skills, or learn new ones, on your own:
 - Take a recreational shop class at an adult education center or park district
 - Take a course at your union's school after hours, and
 - Read books about your trade
- 8) Volunteer where you can practice your trade, for example, with Habitat for Humanity, where volunteers build houses for low-income people.
- 9) Learn to accept constructive criticism, focus on the usefulness of the advice rather than the delivery.

10) Many tradeswomen say the most important thing is to make it hard not to train you, finish assignments quickly and thoroughly and repeatedly ask for more work, demonstrating efficiency, eagerness to learn and confidence in your ability. Filter this advice through your knowledge of your worksite and find the strategies that work best in that context.

Finally, remember that you're looking for progress, not perfection. Many experienced tradeswomen say that learning a trade always seems to take longer than it should. They also say that you'll never know everything about your trade. One woman, who has been a carpenter for twelve years says, *"I run into new stuff every day still. If I take the attitude that I'll know it all tomorrow, I'll be disappointed tomorrow."*

"I always tell apprentices that you'll come out of the program with a journeyworker card and a damn psychology degree! You have to read people and figure out how to get them to teach you. Sometimes jumping on in and making mistakes gets you yelled at but educated on how to do it right..sometimes just asking if you could jump in and help with something you want to learn gets the tools in your hands. Whatever your strategy, be prepared to get shot down and try a different angle but always with a great attitude!" Sarah Stigler, Plumber Local #130

Tools for Success

Chapter 3: What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?

Working in a Traditionally Male Environment

The construction industry is traditionally male dominated and sexist attitudes are unfortunately still all too common on the jobsite. Your presence and your work will be a problem for some men. They may make belittling comments, check your work constantly, or act surprised when you've done a good job. They may also be more aggressive. Tradeswomen say they've been threatened with physical harm, have had their work sabotaged and have been placed in dangerous situations by co-workers.

Unfortunately, you may have to cope with more than sexism. Women of color encounter racism, and both lesbian and heterosexual women say they hear hateful language about lesbians. While the goal of tradeswomen's organizations and the individual tradeswomen who demonstrate every day that women can do this work, is to eliminate discrimination, there are many considerations that go into each woman's decision about how to deal with situations that arise on the job site. If you are working with someone displaying sexist attitudes, you may need to determine case by case whether it is worth it to you to confront it head-on or whether some other strategy, including ignoring it, might be just as effective and less disruptive to your work/life.

Support Groups

Some tradeswomen rely on informal support groups; they meet with other tradeswomen for dinner once a month, call tradeswomen friends regularly or belong to an on-line mentorship site. Others take part in more formal support groups organized by tradeswomen's organizations or by fellow union members.

If you are in a formal group, remember these basic principles:

- 1) Listen carefully; don't just wait for our own time to speak.**
- 2) Don't pass judgment of what people say.**
- 3) Make sure that everyone understands that what is said in the group is confidential**
- 4) Make sure that everyone has a chance to participate.**
- 5) Make sure your group is a welcoming place for all tradeswomen**

Whether your support groups is formal or informal, you can use it to break the isolation of working in a traditionally male environment. As a tradeswoman you may sometimes be the only woman on a site, working alone, and sometimes taking breaks and eating lunch alone. If this is difficult for you, a support group can help.

A support group can also be a place where people will understand why you're in the trades. Other tradeswomen will share your love of the physical work, and they'll understand that you could never sit a

desk all day long. You'll be able to share stories about your work that no one else understands. you'll also get information about finding and keeping jobs, preparing physically and mentally for your work, what kind of clothes to wear and where to find them in your size.

Finally, support groups will give you a chance to talk about the difficulties you may encounter on the job. Most tradeswomen find it best to be unemotional on the job. Almost everyone says, "Never let them see you sweat." However, you'll still need an outlet away from work for the strong feelings you may have.

Developing Your Own Strategy

Often, you may find you need more than a support group to cope on the job. You're also going to need a strategy to handle unpleasant remarks and incidents as they occur. This strategy has to be your own, and it may be very different from the strategies of other, equally successful tradeswomen. It's best to think out how to react before an incident occurs. Some tradeswomen write their answers to offensive remarks in the notebooks they keep in their lunchboxes or pickets and practice these answers with other tradeswomen or with their support groups.

As a coping strategy some tradeswomen are quiet and reserved:

"I'm not friendly - I just do what I'm told to do. I get the respect that I give. Different women encounter different things, but I do feel like you go in with a certain attitude - not that you're one of the guys, or take all the crap they're going to pile on you - you go and try to fit in. For the most part, you can get by."

Others are very outgoing and open:

"I'm a first year apprentice, and everybody knows me. The general contractor, every boss that comes down there knows me, because I just let everybody know where I stand. If you don't like it, my attitude is, then fire me. I don't expect you to change; don't expect me to change. I'm gonna do what I'm gonna do, you're gonna do what you're gonna do."

Some tradeswomen ignore a lot of the negative things that go on:

"The naked pictures on the wall, instead of complaining about them, don't look at them. You have to bite your tongue sometimes."

Some women try to understand that they're entering what has been a man's world for a long time:

"We're breaking into their world. If we say, 'Don't say this, don't say that,' they will never accept us, they'll always resent us. I don't try to change them. They can have any book on the table they want, just don't put it in my face. I let them be them and I'm me. Instead of trying to change them, you try to gain their respect as a person, then a woman. There are problems any person would have on a job. I have problems, not because I'm a woman or because I'm black, but because they're just jerks. It's nothing toward me."

Others try to fit in on their own terms:

"You should just be yourself. you don't have to act like a guy. You're a lady. I wear my makeup." I'm a lady; I went on the job as a lady, and I left as a lady. You have to be very strong minded to keep your dignity. But I was out there to work, and they knew it."

"It's a fine line between being accepted on your crew, and being one of the "guys". No one ever forgets that we are women. I try to dress and act in a way that reads like I'm there to be taken seriously and to work. Period. I'm friendly with everyone but I try to just shut down the conversation or personal questions when it gets inappropriate. No apologizing, just "what the hell joe, that's none of your damn business" and you can usually laugh it off."

Some tradeswomen don't find the trades to be all that different from everyday life:

"Racism, sexism- they're not unique to the trades. These are world issues. It's not just the Polish guys, it's not just the Irish guys - It's a male thing. There are black men who don't want black women in the trades."

Both lesbians and heterosexual women encounter homophobia:

"One day this guy told me, 'A lot of guys are saying you're a lesbian because you don't date any of them.' I was shocked that they were saying that. At first I wanted to defend myself - to let everyone know that I'm not a lesbian. Then I thought about it- I didn't need to defend myself. I realized that they can think anything they want- I'm as gay as they think I am - and It's none of their business anyway."

"One guy asked me, 'are you gay?' I asked, 'Are you gay?'"

Many say you need a way to let off steam:

"When I was at the utility and they said terrible things to me, I was quiet. But my doctor said to me that this job was going to make me sick if didn't start opening up my mouth, so that's when I started swearing. There's a double standard. They don't think about what they say to you , but when you have a comeback, some of them get offended."

"I adapted a little phrase that one of the kids that we were training used to say, 'You'll get over it.' I started using the phrase and let the aggravation run off. You do have to find a way that t doesn't get stuck in there, because when it does, it really does eat at you. You have to let it roll."

Others caution not to let off steam prematurely, if at all:

"When I get upset I wait until things cool off. Then I go to talk to them."

"Women don't stick around because they're too involved in emotionalism. You can't get ahead by being emotional. You've got to have the sperm mentality that men do - that go-getter attitude. It's an uphill battle, up the canal. You've got to be the winner. A lot of them are trying to get up that canal and only

one's going to fertilize that egg, and you've got to decide you're going to be that one. You've got to be the winner, whether you're a man or a woman. That's the name of the game."

And some do nothing at all:

"Somebody will say to me, 'You're going to put up that drywall by yourself?' Sometimes I don't answer - I don't think they deserve a response. If I'm in a bad mood, I'll look straight through them."

Almost everyone says, "Never let them see you sweat":

"If someone says something that gets to me, I never let them know. Anybody who teases, once they find out they get to you, they don't stop."

"You've got to have a lot of balls - you can't let them break your spirit. You've got to be strong on the job. You can cry and kick the hell out of the door when you get home, but you've got to be strong on the job."

Tools for Success - Chapter 4: If You've Ever Carried Groceries or Children, You Can Do It:

Meeting the Physical Challenges

Women are more than capable of doing heavy work in the trades. Generally, you'll be expected to be able to lift 70 pounds. According to one tradeswoman, any woman who's ever carried children or groceries can carry 70 pounds (and we'd love to meet a woman who's never carried children or groceries). Possible, however, does not mean comfortable, and for many women, the constant physical activity and repetitive lifting will be difficult until their bodies adjust to these new demands. Be patient with your body's learning curve and:

Work on your physical conditioning

Join a gym, or work out on your own or with other women in the trades. Women usually need to work on upper-body strength, but overall conditioning is important too.

Expect to be tested.

Many tradeswomen report that they are asked to do what men wouldn't do by themselves. Some suggest that you try, or at least pretend to try, the jobs you're asked to do. "Conduct yourself as if you are being spied on and give them a good show."

Know your limits

Don't injure yourself to prove that you can do the work. If you've tried (or pretended to try) to lift something and you think you'll hurt yourself, ask for help.

Learn to "work smart" and leverage.

Talk to other tradeswomen about techniques for handling tools and equipment. Watch how other workers are doing jobs to find the most efficient method.

If you're injured, give yourself enough time to recover.

Tradeswomen say they are sometimes pressured to go back to heavy work before they've recovered completely from an injury. Remember that it's better to wait a little longer and recover completely than to injure yourself again right away.

Worker's Compensation

If you are injured on the job or if you have a job-related disease, you're eligible for Workers' Compensation. Benefits include first aid, emergency care, and medical and hospital services. If you're unable to work for more than three days, you're entitled to Total Temporary Disability, compensation for the time lost from work. For more serious injury or illness, you are entitled to long-term benefits, including vocational rehabilitation. For a state by state guide to filing for worker's compensation, visit: <http://www.dol.gov/owcp/dfec/regs/compliance/wc.htm>

For injuries or job-related illness, follow these steps carefully:

1) Notify your supervisor. It is best to notify your supervisor orally; if your company requires you to notify them in writing, keep a copy of your notice. Be sure that your

notice stresses that the injury or illness is job-related. Although you have 45 days under Worker's Compensation Law to give notice, it's best to do it immediately.

2) See medical attention. Your employer must pay for the doctor you choose. Be sure that the doctor's notes about your case mention the work connection.

3) Keep good records. Include the time, date, and place of the accident, if equipment was involved, and the names and addresses of any witnesses.

4) Unless your case is very simple and you are absolutely sure that your employer will pay all health costs and loss of work benefits, file a claim with the Industrial Commission of your state.

Never agree to settle your case until you talk with a union representative or a lawyer who knows Worker's Compensation benefits well. Worker's Compensation is complicated. Unless your case is a very simple one, you'll probably need assistance to obtain the benefits you're entitled to.

Additional resources:

Handbook of Workers Compensation and Occupational Diseases -
www.iwcc.il.gov/handbook020106.pdf

State Workers' Compensation Officials:

<http://www.dol.gov/owcp/dfec/regs/compliance/wc.htm>

Clothes and Safety Equipment

Clothing and equipment that doesn't fit well aren't safe. If your employer provides gloves, rubber boots, hard hats, welding helmets, dust masks, goggles, safety belts and other equipment, make sure they fit. Don't work with clothes or equipment that doesn't fit, they will not protect you and can actually endanger you. Ask your employer for proper equipment and if they won't provide clothes and equipment that fit you, ask your union to help you get the equipment that does.

Dangerous Working Conditions

You will find dangerous working conditions from time to time as you work in the trades and, if you see something, you should say something. If your employer will not correct these conditions when you point them out, you can notify to your union, asking for their assistance in getting conditions corrected. You can also anonymously file a safety violation notice to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor, which will inspect your workplace and can require your employer to correct unsafe conditions - <https://www.osha.gov/as/opa/worker/complain.html>. Finally, if you are very concerned about your safety, you can refuse to perform the work you find dangerous, stating that you will do it when the specific hazards you mention have been corrected. If you are fired for doing this, you can contact your union or OSHA.

If you're injured or if you have an illness related to your work, you should report it your employer, and encourage other workers to do the same thing. Many workers hesitate to do

this because they are afraid of losing their jobs. However, compensation claims put pressure on employers to make the workplace safer for all workers. Unfortunately, as a woman you may encounter additional safety problems. Tradeswomen say that co-workers and supervisors sometimes put them in dangerous situations. They also say that they are sometimes chosen over men for dangerous assignments, or not given proper equipment when others are, or assigned to work alone on a job which normally requires two people.

If you think you are being treated differently from other workers in matters safety, or if a co-worker or supervisor is endangering you, you need to take these steps:

- *Write down exactly what is happening, including the date, your assignment, other workers' assignments and any conversations related to the events.*
- *Report your complaint to your supervisor. If your supervisor is aware of the problem and not doing anything about it, or is causing the problem, speak to your supervisor's boss (the owner, or general contractor).*
- *Report the problem to your union steward as well.*

Problems with Hygiene

Although courts have ruled against employers that do not provide sanitary toilet facilities, construction worksites are often hygiene (health) hazards for women. Most have portable toilets used by both men and women. At some sites these toilets are very dirty. At other sites toilets are far away, or there are not toilets at all. There are almost never sinks for washing hands. This is a very sensitive topic for tradeswomen with many different views on what is tolerable and how and when to make complaint.

Here are some suggestions for dealing with hygiene problems:

- *Request a toilet (with a key) for women only – tradeswomen caution that this is very often denied and you should be prepared to find an alternative.*
- *Use the facilities of buildings nearby*
- *If there is no toilet on site, ask for time to get to the closest facility.*
- *Come prepared: bring your own toilet paper, zip lock baggies for feminine products, disinfectant wipes, or hand sanitizer as a precaution*
- *For more information, visit:*
<https://www.osha.gov/doc/acsh/haswicformal.html#sanitaryfacilities>

Reproductive Health

In your work in the trades you may encounter working conditions that are hazardous to your reproductive health, conditions that may cause miscarriages, unhealthy babies and damage to your reproductive system. In the past some hazardous workplaces refused to hire women of childbearing age; this discrimination is now illegal as a result of a 1991 Supreme Court decision. The decision, however, did not solve the problem of sites that are hazardous for both men and women.

If you think that there are reproductive health hazards in your workplace, get as much information as you can about these hazards, including how they can be eliminated or controlled. If you are pregnant, or if you are considering becoming pregnant, you should get this information as quickly as possible. Then, working with your co-workers or with your union, prove to your employer that your workplace is hazardous.

For more information, visit <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/reproductivehazards/index.html>

Pregnancy & Breastfeeding

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy. An employer cannot refuse to hire you or force you to go on leave because you are pregnant. An employer must treat your pregnancy as he or she would treat any other disability. In addition, under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, women who have worked at least 25 hours a week for the previous 12 months and who are employed by companies with 50 or more employees are entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for childbirth or adoption. Many employers have had no experience with pregnant tradeswomen and no clear policies about handling their needs. If you are the first pregnant tradeswoman to work for your employer, you may have the opportunity to suggest good policies.

If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, get the following information before you tell your employer. *Don't tell your co-workers until you tell your employer; news travels very fast in the trades!*

- 1) What are the current policies on pregnancy? What has happened with any other pregnant tradeswomen?*
- 2) What hazards to your pregnancy are there on your job, and how can you reduce or eliminate them (chemicals, heavy lifting, etc.)?*
- 3) Will you want alternate (light) duty, is it possible to get it? Will your pay rate change?*
- 4) If you are planning to breastfeed, are you able to do so on the job or express milk during a break? For a state by state guide on pregnancy and breastfeeding - <http://www.dol.gov/wb/maps>*

You and your doctor or midwife will decide what is most healthy for you and your baby. You may have to educate your doctor about your work, including what physical activity is required and whether there are hazardous conditions on your job.

If you need to make changes on your job, your medical professional should request them specifically. Examples of specific requests are no exposure to hazardous chemicals and no repetitive heavy lifting.

If your employer will not grant you alternate duty (and will do so for other disabilities), if your employer fires you or lays you off because of your pregnancy, or if he or she discriminates against you in any way because of your pregnancy, you should consult with a tradeswomen's organization, with a lawyer and with your union.

Additional resources:

<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/pregnancy.cfm>

<http://womenemployed.org/sites/default/files/resources/YourRightsWhenYouArePregnant2012.pdf>

<http://www.dol.gov/wb/maps>

Tools for Success

Chapter 5: It's Not Sexy - It's Hostile and It's against the Law

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is against the law. Unfortunately, even though it is illegal, women in all professions encounter it. Women working in occupations dominated by men, however, experience it more often than women doing more traditional work.

Tradswomen say they have been subjected to the following actions which can be considered sexual harassment:

- being touched in sexual ways,
- working around pictures of naked or nearly naked women,
- working areas with sexual graffiti
- requests for "dates,"
- comments on their appearance,
- remarks about their sex lives,
- remarks about the harasser's sex life,
- whistling,
- leering,
- obscene jokes,
- jokes that put women down,
- sexual rumors,
- "pranks" with sexual overtones,
- being called sweetie, honey, babe, fox, etc.
- being stared at constantly,
- assault, and
- rape

Sexual harassment can be very hard to deal with. It is embarrassing and frightening. Some women mistakenly believe the harassment is their fault, that something they did brought it on. Some don't know how to report it or think that people won't believe them. Others want to fit in on the job and feel that they are being "bad sports" by reporting sexual harassment. Many women are afraid that they will lose their jobs and jeopardize their careers, or that the harasser will lose his job, if they report harassment.

You are, however, protected under the law. Federal guidelines issued in 1980 for Title VII of the Civil Rights Act describe sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature:

- ***when these advance or requests are a condition of employment,***

- *when whether you reject or submit to them influences what happens to you on the job,*
- *when they create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.*

The law also says that your employer is liable for any sexual harassment in the workplace by your supervisor, whether or not your employer knew about the harassment. your employer is also liable for any sexual harassment by a co-work if he or she either know about it or should have known about it.

Stopping Sexual Harassment

If you think you are being harassed, trust your instincts. You probably are. Get support from a friend, a family member or a tradeswomen's organization. Find out what your company's policies on sexual harassment are. Keep good records of the harassment, and try to find witnesses. Think about what you may want as a resolution to the problem.

Some kinds of sexual harassment are both very obvious and very threatening, for example sexual assault or threats such as "sleep with me or you'll be laid off." If you experience such extreme harassment even once, or if you're uncomfortable with any harassment, report it to a supervisor and your union immediately.

You may decide to deal with less extreme sexual harassment differently. Many tradeswomen say that some men test their reactions to comments on their appearance, requests for dates, sexual innuendoes, etc. Some tradeswomen find that they can sometimes put a stop to this less extreme harassment fairly quickly and suggest these strategies.

Your First Strategies

Many tradeswomen say that a direct, immediate response is the best one.

"Joe, my name is Alice. Don't say, 'Hey, baby.;"

"Please don't touch me."

"Thanks, but I'm not interested in going out. I don't mix work with my social life."

"I don't appreciate that kind of sexual talk and I don't want to hear it any more."

Some women combine directness with humor:

" My six kids go wherever I go. Why on earth are you asking me out?"

The Next Steps

If these kinds of responses don't work and the harassment continues or increases, it's time to change tactics. any one of these steps may stop the harassment, which is, of course, your goal. If these steps

don't stop the harassment, you'll be prepared to press your case with your supervisor or take it to court. In general, courts are ruling that in instances of less extreme harassment, women must show that they made it clear to the harasser that they found his actions objectionable, that the harasser repeated these actions a number of times, and that the company took no steps to stop it.

1) Record all incidents of harassment. For each incident, record as exactly as you can:

- *the date, place and time,*
- *what was said or done, and*
- *any witnesses to the harassment*

It is difficult to remember incidents clearly later, even though you may be sure that you will when they happen. Use your notebook to write down what happened. Record only what happened, not your reactions. (Write "John said such and such", not "John said such and such and I'd like to strangle him.") If your case goes to court, you will have an accurate record of what happened.

Writing down what happened is also a very powerful tool against harassment. Taking out your notebook and writing down what has just happened will help calm you down. It is also very threatening to your harasser. He wants to see you upset, not calm, and the last thing he wants is a record of his behavior.

Make copies of your records, especially if you take them to work with you.

2) Say "no" and say it clearly. *" don't want you to ask me out any more. This is sexual harassment and it offends me. I want you to stop right now." Try to do this when witnesses are around. Again, writing in your notebook the date, place, time and any witnesses.*

3) Write a letter to the harasser. Use your records to make it very specific. Be sure to keep a copy of the letter

"On April 2, 1993, at 2:00, on the second floor of the parking garage at State and Elm Streets, you said, 'I think your body is so fine.' On April 4th, at 3:30, on the third floor of the garage you said the same thing. I am very offended by this. You must stop. If anything like this happens again, I will report it."

4) Try to find out if other women have been harassed by this person.

5) Tell your supervisor about the harassment and show him or her your records. If the harasser is your supervisor, tell his supervisor.

Be prepared to answer questions like these:

- ***Are you willing to submit a written complaint?***
- ***What happened?***
- ***Who was involved?***
- ***When did it occur?***

- ***Has it happened before? How many times? How often? How long has this been going on?***
- ***Where did this take place?***
- ***Are there any witnesses?***
- ***What effect did this have on you? (economic, physical, psychological)***
- ***What have you done about this so far?***
- ***What is your relationship with the harasser outside of work?***
- ***Is anyone else having the same problem?***
- ***What do you want done about it?***

Your employer is required to investigate complaints of sexual harassment immediately and thoroughly. Most investigations begin with your confidential hearings for both victims and accused harasser. If your employer finds that your complaint is valid, he or she must make sure that the harassment stops. The harasser may be told to stop the harassment, or the harasser may be fired or transferred. You can also insist that your company establish a policy on sexual harassment and publicize it to all workers.

6) If your employer does not investigate, or if you do not agree with the conclusions of the investigation, speak to our union steward. he or she will be able to advise you about what you should do next.

7) File a union grievance. Your union steward can help you with this procedure.

8) If these steps don't stop the harassment, or if you are fired after reporting harassment, seek help from your union, a tradeswomen's organization or a lawyer. They can help you decide what to do next.

Detailed information on filing a complaint can be found in "When Push Comes to shove"

Sisters in the Brotherhood

Working with Your Union

Unions have been an important force in improving the welfare of workers, and they can be strong advocates for workers on the construction site. As tradeswomen we support our unions for these reasons. However, we also know that unions have not always met tradeswomen's needs, and that we have much work to improve them.

How You Can Help Your Union

Be well informed. Get copies of your constitution and by-laws, and read them. Attend meetings and social events. Be sure to pay your dues on time, even if you are unemployed.

Get involved in union committees. You can run for an elected committee, or you can ask to be named to an appointed committee. The bargaining and negotiating committees are good places to advocate for women's needs. Electing women to these committees or to other union offices is the best long-term strategy for change. Some unions have women's committees. If your union has one, you can join it. If it doesn't, you can work to establish one.

Women's committees work to:

- ***promote existing women's support groups, or, if there aren't any, to create them.***
- ***promote women's leadership by helping women with elected offices in the union, and by working to have women named to appointed union offices,***
- ***prevent sexual harassment, and promote women's equity in contract language.***
- ***for more information on how to form a women's committee, visit:***
<http://teamster.org/content/how-form-womens-committee>

How Your Union Can Help You

Union Grievances

Your union is obligated to represent you when you have a problem on the job. This method of dealing with a problem is called a grievance procedure.

Your union can file a grievance procedure about any of the following:

- 1) ***violations of the union contract: wages, hours, tools and safety conditions,***
- 2) ***employer violations of federal, state, and local law, including sexual harassment,***
- 3) ***violations of company rules,***
- 4) ***unfair or discriminatory treatment, especially in hiring or in lay-offs, and***

5) violations of past practices (commonly recognized procedures and policies of the worksite).

If you want to file a grievance about any of these issues, contact your union steward as soon as possible. Explain what is going on and how you would like to have it resolved. Your union steward should then investigate your complaint. If your steward finds it is valid, he or she will then bring it to your employer, either informally or through a written grievance. Your complaint can ultimately go to arbitration.

Union Contracts

Unions set standards for wages, safety, hiring and working conditions through contracts. They are the basis for many of your rights as a worker. By participating in any part of the contract process you can work for equality for women and better conditions for all workers.

Contracts are developed through this process:

1) Members indicate what they want in a contract, in writing or at union meetings. Union members can do this as individuals or as members of a committee. Women's committees may be a group that deals with tradeswomen's equity issues.

2) The union bargaining committee draws up the best possible contract language using this input.

3) The negotiating committee bargains with management to agree on a contract, which must be ratified by the union membership.

If Your Union Discriminates Against You

If you think your union has discriminated against you in hiring, in training, in refusing to file a grievance, or in disciplining you for any activity, you should try these steps:

1) Work within your union, talking with sympathetic members. They may be able to influence the union leadership.

2) If there is a women's committee in your union, ask for their support. If there isn't one, talk to other women about supporting you.

3) Contact a tradeswomen's support group for advice. Tradeswomen's support groups have extensive experience with unions and can offer both perspective and support.

4) Contact a national organization working for women's rights

Your union is required by law to represent all its members equally; the National Labor Relations Board, which has offices around the country, enforces the law. One of your options is to file a complaint, however, may have negative consequences, including retaliation by your union. Since retaliation is against the law, your union may eventually have to pay damages. However, the legal process can take years. Experienced tradeswomen and tradeswomen's organization say that filing a complaint is the very last step you should take after you've exhausted all other means to remedy the situation.

Tools for Success

Chapter 7: When Push Comes to Shove

Legal Remedies for Employment Discrimination

employment discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, and national origin is against federal law; discrimination based on sexual orientation is also against local law in some areas. If you feel that you are being discriminated against, you have legal remedies.

To prove discrimination you'll need good records. For all incidents where you felt you were discriminated against, you should have records with dates, times, places, witnesses and any other important information. If possible, take these notes at work, when the incident is fresh in your mind.

If there is a tradeswomen's organization in your community, ask for advice about any employment discrimination. We may be able to intervene on your behalf. We may also advise you to try to resolve discrimination yourself first.

If your tradeswomen's organization can't help you and if you can't resolve the discrimination on your own, your union can file a grievance or you file a complaint with one of several agencies. You must file this complaint six months to one year from the time the discrimination occurred, depending on the agency you choose.

Resolving the Discrimination Yourself

To resolve the problem on your own, try the following steps:

- 1) Discuss the problem directly with the person immediately responsible.**
- 2) Explain why you think you are being treated differently from other workers, with specific examples. Explain what the impact of the discriminatory treatment is and how it is harmful (perhaps to your training, to career advancement, to safety or to morale).**
- 3) Propose solutions to the problem. Specify the remedy and who can implement the remedy. Estimate what it would cost.**
- 4) If the person responsible says that he or she can address your concerns, ask who will be responsible for doing this and when it will be done.**
- 5) If the person responsible cannot help you, ask for suggestions about your next steps.**
- 6) Regardless of the outcome of the conversation, follow it up with a letter. Include the date of the meeting, the names of the participants, the issues discussed and the solutions proposed. Keep a copy of this letter for yourself.**

Taking Legal Action

Filing a charge of discrimination is one of our options. If you win, you can be reinstated to your job with back pay, your company can be prohibited from discriminating against you or others, you can win back other rights that you may have been denied, such as overtime and seniority, and you can be awarded the money you spent on your lawyer. you should be aware, though, that legal action is time-consuming and can be emotionally draining.

Because the early stages of the process are so important, getting limited advice from a lawyer before you file charges is probably well worth the money. It's useful to have an objective opinion about the merits of your case from someone who is familiar with the law, and you don't necessarily have to retain this person if you decide to file.

If you have a complex case or if you want to get into the process faster, you may decide to keep a lawyer. If you win your case you may be awarded your lawyer's fees, but you still have to come up with the money to hire him or her. Some lawyers will take a case on a contingent fee basis, getting paid only if you win your case, but usually only if either the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or, in Chicago, the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) has found grounds to file a complaint. Free legal services are available based on income in some communities; your local Bar Association can give you more information .

In Chicago, the Legal Assistance Foundation will assist low-income people with legal matters, also visit for a list of free or reduced rate legal services

<http://www.illinoislegalaid.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.helpfulOrgsAll>.

Where to File Your Complaint

Tradeswomen from all parts of the country can file with two federal agencies, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). You can also file with state, county, and city agencies. Since the jurisdictions and regulations of local agencies vary, you should get advice about where to file from your union, from a tradeswomen's organization or from your lawyer. The following are options for women living in the Chicago Area.

Filing Complaints in Chicago

In Chicago you can file your complaint with federal agencies:

- ***the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)***
- ***the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)***

or with Local agencies

- ***the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR)***
- ***the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR)***
- ***the Cook County Commission on Human Relations***

The best place to file a complaint is probably with the Illinois Department of Human Rights. Generally, it is less expensive to litigate there, and the Human Rights Commission, the state entity that follows up on findings of discrimination, tends to be more sympathetic to victims than the federal court. Also, the state will automatically cross-file your claim with the EEOC, while the reverse is not true. You can go directly to the HRC if the IHDR is too slow, but you must wait for the EEOC to act before you can file a case in federal court.

You do not need a lawyer to file your charge, since both the IDHR and EEOC will assist you. However, hiring a lawyer is probably a good idea, since the lawyer can make sure your case is getting proper attention.

Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) <http://www2.illinois.gov/dhr/Pages/default.aspx>

- *IDHR investigates discriminatory conduct as long as your company employs at least 15 workers.*
- *You have 180 days from the date of the discriminatory conduct to file your charge. The IDHR will hold a fact-finding conference and upon a finding of "substantial evidence" it will file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission (HRC). The HRC holds a public hearing before an administrative law judge.*
- *If IDHR does not act on your charge within 300 days of your filing, you can proceed directly to the HRC if you do so within 30 days of the IDHR's failure to act.*

City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCCHR)

http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cchr/supp_info/file_a_discriminationcomplaint.html

- *You may file a charge here within 180 days of the discriminatory conduct, as long as events took place in Chicago. If, after investigation, the executive compliance staff finds that there is substantial evidence, it will file the charge before an administrative law judge.*

Cook County Commission on Human Rights <http://www.cookcountyil.gov/human-rights-commission-on/complaint-filing-and-investigation/>

- *You can file here for discrimination that occurred in Cook County but not in Chicago.*
- *You must file your complaint within 180 days of the discrimination; an investigation will follow.*
- *Penalties include actual damages and fines from \$100 to \$500.*
- *You may request permission to bypass the Commission and file in court.*

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

http://www.eoc.gov/federal/fed_employees/complaint_overview.cfm

- *You can file a claim here within 360 days of the discriminatory conduct, or within 30 days of the termination of state proceedings, whichever is earlier.*
- *The EEOC may investigate the claim; if it finds reasonable grounds for the charge, it will file a complaint in federal court on your behalf.*

Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP)

<http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/pdf/pdfstart.htm>

- *You can file a complaint here if your complaint is against a federally funded contractor or against an apprenticeship program regulated by the Office of Apprenticeship.*
- *You must file your complaint within 180 days of the discriminatory conduct.*