

**Illinois Center for Injury Prevention**

Vulnerable Workers

Vulnerable workers are those that are undocumented or immigrant with low wages. Vulnerable workers are contingent workers, or workers who are subcontractors, consultants, or temps and work under precarious conditions. Many are subject to hourly and short term contracts, which provide little protections when injured. Vulnerable workers tend to work in the most hazardous jobs, with minimal safeguards, little to no training and in environments that are difficult to regulate.

In 2012, there were 25 million vulnerable workers in the US workforce, comprising 16.1% of the total working population. Hispanics accounted for 48.3% of the vulnerable workers and Asians accounted for 23.7%. Vulnerable workers were more likely to be employed in service occupations; production, transportation and material moving; and natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations. Additionally, vulnerable workers had median weekly earnings of \$625 in 2012, compared with \$797 for their native-born counterparts.

OSHA and Vulnerable Workers

Many vulnerable workers have a poor understanding of OSHA and Workers' Compensation.

- Undocumented workers are protected under OSHA
- Undocumented workers are protected under workers' compensation for medical treatment costs
- Undocumented workers are not protected from lost wages, therefore are at-risk of employer retaliation through loss of employment.

Contact Information for OSHA Region 5 Headquarters

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

US Department of Labor

Regional Office

230 South Dearborn Street, Room 3244

Chicago, Illinois 60604

Phone: (312) 353-2220

Fax: (312) 353-7774