



Blue-Collar Workers and Tobacco

Blue-Collar workers are disproportionately affected by tobacco use:

- About 24% of employed workers in Minnesota are blue-collar workers.¹
- On average, 36% of craft workers and laborers smoke, compared to 32% of service workers, and 21% of white-collar workers. Up to 40% of cooks and truck drivers, 46% of waiters and waitresses, and 60% of roofers smoke.^{2,3}
- Blue-collar workers are heavier smokers and begin smoking earlier than white-collar workers.²
- Blue-collar workers are less successful than other workers at quitting smoking. They make as many short-term attempts to quit as white-collar workers, but are less likely to quit for good.²
- White-collar workers are more likely than other workers to have employer assistance with quitting.⁴
- 54% of white-collar workers are covered by smoke free policies in the workplace, compared to 35% of service workers and 27.4% of blue-collar workers.²

Smoking multiplies the risk of lung cancer from asbestos exposure:

- One-third of cancer cases among smokers exposed to asbestos on the job can be attributed to the combination of smoking and asbestos exposure.⁵
- Smoking increases the toxic effects of asbestos exposure in workers.⁶
- Death from asbestosis is three times higher among workers who smoke a pack of cigarettes or more a day than among non-smokers.⁷

¹ Minnesota Workforce Center.

² Gerlach KK, Shopland DR, Hartman AM, Gibson JT, Pechacek TF. Workplace smoking policies in the United States: Results from a national survey of more than 100,000 workers. *Tobacco Control*, 6(3):199-206, 1997.

³ Sorensen G, Emmons K, Stoddard AM, Linnan L, Avrunin J. Do social influences contribute to occupational differences in quitting smoking and attitudes toward quitting? *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 16(3):135-41, 2002.

⁴ Shopland DR, Anderson CM, Burns DM, Gerlach KK. Disparities in smoke-free workplace policies among food service workers. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 46(4):347-356, 2004.

⁵ Erren TC, Jacobsen M, Piekarski C. Synergy between asbestos and smoking on lung cancer risks. *Epidemiology*, 10:405-411, 1999.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Making Your Workplace Smokefree: A Decision Maker's Guide*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health, 1996.

⁷ Omowunmi O, Afilaka AA, Doucette J, Golden A, Soriano T, Rovner E, Anselm E. Study of smoking behavior in asbestos workers. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 41(1):62-69, 2002.