

Blue-Collar Workers and Tobacco

Smoking Prevalence

- Sixty percent of workers in Minnesota are blue-collar workers, according to 2008-2009 data.¹
- In 2010, 16.1% of workers in Minnesota (about 397,000 persons) were represented by a union.²
- The rate of smoking is higher among blue-collar workers than white-collar workers.³ One-third of blue-collar and service workers are smokers, whereas one-fifth of white-collar workers are smokers.⁴
- Compared to an overall rate of 19.6% for working adults 18 years of age or older, smoking rates in some occupational categories are significantly higher:
 - 31.4% of workers in construction and extraction
 - 30% of hospitality workers in food preparation and service
 - 28.7% of workers in transportation and material moving
 - 26.1% of workers in the production industry³
- Blue-collar workers are less likely to have smoke-free workplace policies compared to white-collar workers.⁵
- There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and despite increased clean indoor air laws, blue-collar and service workers continue to have higher levels of cotinine, a component of tobacco smoke found in blood plasma, than workers in other occupations.⁶



Tobacco Marketing

- Historically, the tobacco industry has identified the working class as a critical market, using advertisements that depict a rugged, self-reliant, independent man with blue-collar/working class ethos.⁷



Tobacco-Related Health Risks

- Blue-collar workers are not only more likely to smoke, they are also more likely to be exposed to occupational hazards that interact with tobacco, multiplying negative health effects.⁴
- The interaction between tobacco smoke and occupational toxins can increase the risk of lung cancer for blue-collar workers by up to 53 times compared to individuals who do not smoke and are not exposed to occupational toxins.⁸
- The interaction between tobacco smoke and occupational exposures increases the risk for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease among blue-collar workers.⁹

Quit Smoking

- Although blue-collar and white-collar workers attempt to quit smoking at the same rate, blue-collar and service workers are less likely to quit successfully.^{4, 10}
- White-collar workers are more likely than other workers to have quitting assistance available to them through their employers.¹¹

References

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To learn more about smoking cessation, visit www.workshifts.org.