Guide to Establishing Indiana’s Common Construction Wage

A brief synopsis of the history, policies and legal requirements of the Common Construction Wage Act
Guide To Establishing Indiana’s Common Construction Wage

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How to Establish the Common Construction Wage for a Public Works Project

The Role of the Indiana Department of Labor

The Indiana Department of Labor is the executive agency charged with administering Indiana’s labor laws, including Indiana’s Common Construction Wage Act. In this capacity, the Indiana Department of Labor (IDOL) takes an active role in both the facilitation of Common Construction Wage committee hearings and the enforcement of wage determinations established by these committees.

In an effort to facilitate these hearings, the IDOL has reserved meeting dates, times and public locations in each of Indiana’s ninety-two counties. Upon an Awarding Agency’s request, the IDOL will schedule a Common Construction Wage committee hearing. The department will also provide committee notices, publications and supplemental materials necessary to facilitate these hearings.

The IDOL is also vested with the authority to enforce each committee’s wage determination. The department conducts numerous audits of contractor payroll records each year to verify wage compliance with the applicable Common Construction Wage determinations. These audits are initiated by both employee complaint and by random selection.

Please read further as we explain the Common Construction Wage Act and related case law, and as we better explain the Indiana Department of Labors policies concerning Common Construction Wage.

For more up-to-date information, please visit www.in.gov/dol.
Background

Since the Indiana General Assembly’s adoption of Chapter 319, Acts of 1935, Indiana’s prevailing wage law (now the Common Construction Wage Act) has resulted in establishing the wage rates to be paid to construction workers on Indiana’s public works projects.

As the administrators of this process, Common Construction Wage committees are responsible for seeing that the wages adopted for use on the projects are indeed the most commonly paid construction wages as required by the Indiana Common Construction Wage Act (Indiana Code 5-16-7-1 et seq.) and the applicable case law.

The Committee and Its Members

Indiana’s Common Construction Wage committees are formed by the awarding governmental agency. However, the committees themselves are autonomous in nature; with four of the five committee members being appointed by separate appointing authorities as specified in Indiana Code 5-16-7-1 (b).

Each Committee Consists of:

1. An Industry Representative, appointed by the Awarding Agency (Awarding Agency Representative);

2. A Labor Representative, appointed by the president of the state federation of labor (presently the AFL-CIO).

3. An appointee of the Governor of Indiana (traditionally from the Indiana Department of Labor);

4. A Taxpayer appointed by the Awarding Agency (Awarding Agency Taxpayer Representative) who pays the tax that will be the funding source for the project and who lives in the county where the project will be constructed, and

5. A Taxpayer appointed by the County Legislative Body (County Legislative Body Taxpayer Representative) who pays the tax that will be the funding source for the project and who lives in the county where the project will be constructed.

The Committee’s Objective

After the committee, having been duly appointed, assembles in accordance with the Indiana’s Open Door Law, the committee is charged with determining in writing the most common wage (mathematical mode), including fringe benefits, for each classification and level of skill required by the project. The law mandates that the committee must consider county-specific data from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, as well as any other data submitted by interested parties to determine wage rates appropriate to the county where the project is located. If the committee is unable to reach a decision, the statute dictates that the Awarding Agency will decide what wages are to be paid and their determination will be final. Upon discharging its statutory duties, the committee’s obligations are concluded.
Hearing Requirements

Open Door Law
The committee must meet in accordance with the provisions of Indiana’s Open Door Law. (IC 5-14-1.5.) Public notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing must be given at least forty-eight (48) hours (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) before the hearing. The requirements of the Open Door law are fulfilled by: (1) posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the public agency holding the hearing or, if no such office exists, at the building where the hearing is to be held; (2) and delivering notice to all news media which have requested such notices.

Date of the Hearing
Indiana Code 5-16-7-1(f) requires that the committee meet and make a determination at least two weeks prior to the date fixed for the letting of the contract. To facilitate the hearing process, the Indiana Department of Labor schedules hearings in accordance with a “Once-a-Month” schedule. This schedule guarantees that hearings can be held in each of Indiana’s 92 counties on a regularly-occurring day per month. The goal is to minimize confusion and to give Awarding Agencies a specific target date to use in their project timelines. Please refer to Page 9 for a copy of the Indiana Department of Labor’s scheduling policy and “Once-a-Month” schedule.

Hearing Location
The committee has a statutory obligation to meet in the county where the project is located. IC 5-16-7-1(c).

Duties of the Committee

Upon convening, the committee is charged with considering county-specific data from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development and other interested parties to determine wage rates appropriate to the area where the project is located. IC 5-16-7-4.

Indiana Administrative Code 50 IAC 11-4-3(b)(1) requires that if other data is presented to the committee, including, but not limited to, reports from the U.S. Department of Labor and collective bargaining agreements between bona fide organizations of labor and employees, that these data be considered. However, the act specifically states that the committee does not have to consider information not presented at the hearing. (IC 5-16-7-1(c))

After considering the data, the committee must then determine in writing the classifications of the trades or crafts to be employed. These classifications are divided into the three classes of: skilled, semiskilled and unskilled workers. (IC 5-16-7-1(e)(1)) The committee must then determine, "a scale of wages for each." (IC 5-16-7-4(1))

The act provides that, "[t]he rate of wages determined . . . shall not be less than the Common Construction Wage . . . currently being paid in the county where the project is located." (IC 5-16-7-1(d)) The Indiana Court of Appeals has defined the Common Construction Wage to be the mathematical mode.
Classifications and Classes

Since the adoption of the original prevailing wage law in 1935, “wage scales” have contained a scale of classifications and wages for each of the three skill classes. In 1998, in Union Township School Corporation v. State ex. rel. Joyce, the Court of Appeals affirmed this structure, writing: “the Common Construction Wage statute prescribes a two-step process. First, the committee must classify the labor to be employed, that is, determine the trades or crafts to be utilized on the project. Then the committee must set wages for skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers within each classified trade or craft.” Union Township School Corporation v. State ex. rel. Joyce, 706 N.E.2d 183, 187 (Ind. Ct. App. 1998). The Indiana Department of Labor suggests that the committee adopt a scale containing as many classifications as possible, just in case something unforeseen occurs on the project. If a necessary classification is not on the adopted wage scale, a new hearing should be held to determine the wages and fringes for the missing classification.

Example of the wage scale structure:

| Level of Skill          | Skilled |  | Semiskilled |  | Unskilled |  |
|-------------------------|---------|  |-------------|  |-----------|  |
|                         | Base    | Fringe | Base        | Fringe | Base      | Fringe |
| Classification          | Wage    | Benefits | Wage        | Benefits | Wage      | Benefits |
| Carpenter               | $ Rate  | $ Rate  | $ Rate      | $ Rate  | $ Rate    | $ Rate  |
| Electrician             | $ Rate  | $ Rate  | $ Rate      | $ Rate  | $ Rate    | $ Rate  |
| Laborer                 | $ Rate  | $ Rate  | $ Rate      | $ Rate  | $ Rate    | $ Rate  |
| Operating Engineer      | $ Rate  | $ Rate  | $ Rate      | $ Rate  | $ Rate    | $ Rate  |

Computation of “Common Wage”

The Indiana Court of Appeals in Union Township defined “common” as “that which is customary, takes place daily, is widely used, or is generally known.” Union Township School Corporation v. State ex. rel. Joyce, 706 N.E.2d 183, 187 (Ind. Ct. App. 1998). The court noted, “[i]n mathematical terms, this constitutes the ‘mode.’” Id.

Example of calculating the mode:

Given the following set of ten numbers:

17, 19, 20, 20, 22, 23, 23, 23, 30, 35

The number 23 occurs most often and thereby is considered the mathematical mode.
Fringe Benefits

Although not specifically mentioned in the statute, the Indiana Court of Appeals in *Union Township* found that the term “wages” includes fringe benefits. Moreover, the court, citing a previous decision in *Johnson v. Wiley*, 613 N.E. 2d, 459 n.3 (Ind. Ct. App. 1993), found that Indiana’s broad common-law definition of wages comports with the definition of “wages” found in Black’s Law Dictionary (6th ed.). That definition provides that a wage is:

> Every form of remuneration payable for a given period to an individual for personal services, including salaries, commissions, vacation pay, dismissal wages, bonuses and reasonable value of board, rent, housing, lodging, payments in kind, tips, and any other similar advantage received from the individual’s employer or directly with respect to work for him.

> [The] term should be broadly defined and includes not only periodic monetary earnings but all compensation for services rendered without regard to the manner in which such compensation is computed.


Thus, for the purpose of determining the Common Construction Wage, any fringe benefits paid to construction workers in the county must be included in the computation of the Common Construction Wage. For the purposes of the Common Construction Wage, wages and/or fringe benefits do **not** include those benefits and/or taxes that are legally mandated by state or federal law (e.g. Social Security, Unemployment Tax, Worker’s Compensation Insurance, etc).

Exemptions

**Project Cost**

Indiana Code 5-16-7-1(f) exempts all projects with an actual construction cost of less than $150,000.

**Federally Funded Projects**

The Common Construction Wage Act is not applicable to public projects in Indiana that are to be paid for in whole or in part with funds granted by the federal government. This is true unless the department of the federal government making the grant consents in writing that the provisions of this chapter are applicable to the project. (e.g. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grants that pass through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) are sometimes subject the Common Construction Wage Act.)

**Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Projects**

The Common Construction Wage Act does not apply to contracts let by the Indiana Department of Transportation for the construction of highways, streets, and bridges. Indiana Code 8-23-9 applies to state highway projects.

**Service Contracts**

Except as provided in Indiana Code 5-23, the Common Construction Wage Act does not apply to a person that has entered into an operating agreement with the state, a municipal corporation, or another political subdivision for the management or operation of a public facility under Indiana Code 5-23.
**State Tax Rule**
Indiana Administrative Code 50 IAC 11 requires that local property tax control boards verify compliance with the Common Construction Wage before approving capital project expenditures. Specific questions regarding this rule should be addressed to the Department of Local Government Finance (formerly the State Board of Tax Commissioners).

**Additional Responsibilities of the Awarding Agency**

**Advertising for the Contract**
Before advertising or accepting bids for the contract, the awarding agency must establish the Common Construction Wage committee for purpose of establishing the wage scale for the project. (IC 5-16-7-1(b))

**Two-Week Wait Before Letting the Contract**
After the Common Construction Wage scale has been established for a project and filed with the awarding agency, the awarding agency must wait at least two (2) weeks before letting the contract. A copy of the wage scale must be furnished upon request to any person desiring to bid on the contract. The wage scale should also be open to inspection by the public. (IC 5-16-7-1(f))

**Common Construction Wage as a Condition of the Contract**
In accordance with Indiana Code 5-16-7-1(h), subsequent to establishing the Common Construction Wage scale for a project, the awarding agency must include as a condition of a contract awarded that the successful bidder and all subcontractors comply strictly with the established wage determination.

**Verification of the Contractor's Schedule of Wages**
Additionally, Indiana Code 5-16-7-2 requires that the awarding agency verify compliance with the Common Construction Wage prior to the start of work by any contractor and/or subcontractor. Before any contractor or subcontractor performs work on a public works project, the awarding agency must require each contractor and/or subcontractor performing work to file a schedule of the wages that are to be paid to workers on the project.
Suggested Common Construction Wage Hearing Agenda

1. Election of Committee Chair Person
2. Call to order by Committee Chair Person
3. Introduction of Committee Members
4. Verification of Open Door Compliance
5. Statement of Committee’s purpose
   a. Meet in accordance with Open Door Law
   b. Take evidence and hear testimony from public regarding wages paid in the county
   c. To determine the most common wage (including fringe benefits) for each classification and level of job skill required by the project

6. Overview of the Act
   a. Act governs public works projects exceeding $150,000 in value.
   b. 5 person committee. One from awarding agency, labor, the executive branch and two taxpayers from the project county
   c. Union Township court case defined common as mathematical mode, not average. Mode is the number that appears the most often in any list of numbers

7. Overview of Project

8. Presentation of Data and Testimony
   a. Data from Indiana Department of Workforce Development
   b. Data from the Awarding Agency
   c. Data from AFL-CIO Representative
   d. Data from the Public

9. Questions and Discussion
   a. Open to the Public
   b. If addressing committee, please state your name for the record

10. Determination and Adoption of Wage Scale
    a. Determination of Job Classifications
    b. Evaluation and Discussion of Data
    c. Close Floor to Public Discussion

11. Adoption of Wage Scale
    a. Motion to Adopt
    b. Second the Motion
    c. Open to Discussion
    d. Majority of Quorum carries the motion

12. Closing Comments

13. Adjournment
Indiana Department of Labor’s “Once-a-Month” Schedule

The Indiana Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division has developed a schedule for Common Construction Wage Hearings that will reduce the travel, expense, and confusion related to the current process. On October 1, 2007, the Indiana Department of Labor implemented a policy to schedule Common Construction Wage Hearings using a “Once-a-Month” plan that will establish a regular, recurring day each month for each county statewide.

Previously, hearings were scheduled as soon as a hearing officer could fit it into his or her schedule. With two hearing officers covering the entire state, this sometimes resulted in delays in scheduling or conflicts with committee members. The “Once-a-Month” schedule allows Awarding Agencies to provide their committee members a date up-front so that they can be certain of their availability.

This schedule should also help eliminate most of the redundant travel associated with scheduling Common Construction Wage Hearings. Data shows that in the first six months of 2007, 17 Hoosier counties had more than one Common Construction Wage hearing per month; requiring that representatives meet every few weeks to establish wages. The consolidation of several hearings per county into a single day per month eliminates out-of-office time for committee members, as well as providing certainty to Awarding Agencies that their hearings will be scheduled in a timely manner.

Boosting attendance and significantly lowering operating costs will directly benefit everyone associated with the Common Construction Wage process, and will allow the Indiana Department of Labor to better utilize its capital and resources.

For more information on the “Once-a-Month” policy, please visit [www.in.gov/dol](http://www.in.gov/dol).
# Common Construction Wage
## Hearing Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST MONDAY</th>
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<th>FIRST WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>FIRST THURSDAY</th>
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<td>VERMILLION</td>
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<td>RANDOLPH</td>
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* Should a regularly scheduled hearing date fall on a state or federal holiday, the hearing will be scheduled for the following business day.
Policy Concerning “Expiration” of a Common Construction Wage Scale

Dear Awarding Agency Representative;

The first few months of a new year are historically the most active in state and local government. With new budgets and new goals, many agencies see a boom in public works construction in the early spring. The Indiana Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division would like to remind you that Common Construction Wages are set on a per-project basis, and are considered to be current and enforceable if the project is bid within twelve consecutive months of the scale’s adoption. Therefore, any upcoming projects for the forthcoming year can be set in one hearing, allowing increased flexibility with construction timelines and bidding schedules.

If your agency has multiple projects planned in the next twelve months, please feel free to combine all of them into a single wage hearing. The Indiana Department of Labor is now scheduling hearings in the county of the project on a monthly basis. Please visit www.in.gov/dol for a copy of our scale expiration policy, “Once-a-Month” schedule, and our sample hearing request letter.

If you have any questions or concerns about scheduling Common Construction Wage hearings, please feel free to contact the Wage and Hour Division by phone at (317) 232-2655 or by e-mail at ccw@dol.in.gov. We thank you for your time and patience with the Common Construction Wage process, and we wish you a happy and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,

Rick J. Ruble
General Counsel
Indiana Department of Labor
Indiana Department of Labor  
Common Construction Wage Hearing  
Request Letter Guidelines

Definitions of Appointees
Under IC 5-16-7-1, the Appointees of the Committee are defined as follows:

**Awarding Agency Representative:**
The Awarding Agency Representative can be anyone that the Awarding Agency would like to send on their behalf to the hearing. The Indiana Department of Labor typically recommends that this person have some familiarity with the project(s) to be discussed.

**Awarding Agency Taxpayer Representative:**
This representative is also appointed by the Awarding Agency, but must RESIDE in the COUNTY where the project will be constructed. This appointee should also pay taxes that go toward the project(s) discussed. If the project crosses county lines, then two hearings will be required, one to be held in each county. Each county will need to have a separate Awarding Agency Taxpayer.

**County Legislative Body Taxpayer Representative:**
The County Legislative Body Taxpayer is appointed by the legislative body of the county (e.g. the County Commissioners or County Council) where the project will be constructed. As with the Awarding Agency Taxpayer Representative, this appointee must RESIDE in the COUNTY of the project. This appointee should also pay taxes that go toward the project(s) discussed.

**Please Note:**
Indiana’s Common Construction Wage Act (IC 5-16-7) applies only to state and locally funded projects whose estimated cost is in excess of $150,000. The Indiana Department of Labor will not establish a hearing for any project valued less than $150,000. Any rates established for these projects would be legally unenforceable under Indiana’s Common Construction Wage Act.

Unless consent is given, in writing, by the granting federal agency, any project using **federal funding** could be subject to federal “prevailing wage,” or the Davis-Bacon Act. For more information on Davis-Bacon determinations, please talk to an attorney or visit [http://www.dol.gov/esa/programs/dbra/](http://www.dol.gov/esa/programs/dbra/).

If you have any questions concerning the Common Construction Wage process, please call the Indiana Department of Labor at (317) 232-2655.
Sample Request Letter

To ensure prompt notice to your committee members, please provide e-mail addresses or fax numbers, if applicable.

Please fax your completed request to (317) 234-4449.

DATE:

Indiana Department of Labor
ATTN: Wage and Hour Division
402 West Washington Street, Room W195
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

RE: PROJECT NAME(S), PROJECT DESCRIPTION(S), ACTUAL ESTIMATED COST(S), FUNDING SOURCE(S)

Dear IDOL Representative:

On behalf of the NAME OF AWARDING AGENCY, CITY, COUNTY, Indiana, and pursuant to IC 5-16-7-1, we request that a hearing be scheduled to determine Common Construction Wages for the above referenced projects.

The Estimated Bid Award Date for this Project is BID AWARD DATE. Construction is estimated to begin on CONSTRUCTION BEGIN DATE.

The following representatives have been appointed and agree to serve on the committee:

Awarding Agency Representative:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
<th>E-MAIL and/or FAX</th>
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Awarding Agency Taxpayer Representative:

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<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
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County Legislative Body Taxpayer Representative:

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<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
<th>E-MAIL and/or FAX</th>
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*Also include the NAMES, ADDRESSES, and EMAIL/FAX INFORMATION of any Open Door Law (Public Notice) requests that you have received for this meeting.

If you have any questions, please contact me by phone at YOUR PHONE NUMBER or by email at YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS.

Sincerely,

<table>
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<th>YOUR TITLE</th>
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**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** When will my hearing be scheduled?
**A:** The Indiana Department of Labor has established a “Once-a-Month” schedule for Common Construction Wage Hearings. Each county in the state meets on a specific, recurring day each month. Please submit your request at least five (5) business days before the scheduled date of your hearing. For more information about this schedule, please visit: [http://www.in.gov/dol/files/WHCCWOnceAMonthSchedule082007.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dol/files/WHCCWOnceAMonthSchedule082007.pdf).

**Q:** Who do I contact for a “County Taxpayer Appointee?”
**A:** The “County Taxpayer Appointee” on the requesting letter should be named by the legislative body of the county in which the project will take place (e.g. County Council, Board of Commissioners, etc.). This taxpayer should reside in the project county, and should pay taxes that will be used toward the project itself. A list of contact information for Indiana’s county commissioners can be found at: [http://www.indianacountycommissioners.org/](http://www.indianacountycommissioners.org/).

**Q:** Do I need to set Common Construction Wages for a project that receives federal funding?
**A:** Unless expressly written in an agreement with the United States Department of Labor, projects using federal funding are not subject to Common Construction Wage. The federal “Davis-Bacon” scale may take precedence. Per IC 5-16-7-1, wages cannot be enforced by the Indiana Department of Labor on these projects. Please consult your legal counsel.

**Q:** If one of our committee members is absent, can we still hold a hearing?
**A:** Yes. As long as a quorum is reached, the committee can determine wages. A quorum for a five-person Common Construction Wage committee is 3 or more members.

**Q:** How can I get a copy of the adopted wage scale?
**A:** The Awarding Agency should retain a copy of the adopted wage scale for their records, and should be able to provide a copy to you. Also, the Department of Labor has established a website that contains a Wage Scale search. The address is: [http://www.in.gov/dol/2881.htm](http://www.in.gov/dol/2881.htm).

**Q:** My project is all locally and state funded, but is valued under $150,000. Do I need to set Common Construction Wages?
**A:** No. Per IC 5-16-7-1, the Common Construction Wage Act does not apply to projects under $150,000 in value.

**Q:** Who do we contact with questions concerning the Common Construction Wage process?
**A:** The Common Construction Wage Hearing officers can be reached at the Indiana Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division by calling (317) 232-2655 or e-mailing ccw@dol.in.gov.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

Q: Wages were set on this project less than 12 months ago, but we've added a piece to the construction. Do we need to set wages again?
A: Yes. If the scope of the project has changed, a new committee should be formed and wages should be re-established.

Q: We only need 2 or 3 different classifications of labor on this project. Will we have to pay for all of the classifications presented on the scale?
A: No. Only those classifications used on the project will receive pay from the scale. The Indiana Department of Labor recommends adopting a complete scale, just in case an unforeseen need should arise.

Q: Who can we contact if workers are not being paid Common Construction Wage?
A: The Indiana Department of Labor has an audit process in place. For questions about the audit process, please contact our Audit Coordinator at (317) 232-2655.

Q: My organization wants to compile a Common Construction Wage scale to present to a committee. What data, by law, must a wage scale contain?
A: Anyone wishing to present a wage scale at a Common Construction Wage hearing may do so, however there are a few statutory and legal requirements that must be met. Please see pages 5 and 6 of this document. For more information concerning wage scale format, please call: (317) 232-2655 or e-mail ccw@dol.in.gov or visit: http://www.in.gov/dol/.

Q: How long does a Common Construction Wage Hearing last?
A: Every Common Construction Wage Hearing is unique. It is difficult to predict how long the hearing itself will take. Internally, the Indiana Department of Labor typically allots one hour for each hearing. Many fall well short of this, perhaps only fifteen to twenty minutes. Some may last longer than an hour. Again, it is difficult to predict.

Q: My county adopted wages earlier this year for a different project. Can we use those wages for another project, or do we need to set another scale?
A: Common Construction Wage scales are adopted on a project-by-project basis. Each qualifying public works project will require a separate wage scale.
Contact Information and Helpful Links

Questions regarding specific wage rates should be addressed directly to the agency or organization responsible for commissioning or compiling the survey.

**Indiana Department of Workforce Development Wage Surveys**
For questions regarding these surveys, please contact:
Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs
Indiana Workforce Development
10 North Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(800) 891-6499
workone@dwd.in.gov

**Federal Davis-Bacon Wage Rates**
For questions concerning these surveys, please contact:
Office of Wage Determinations
Wage and Hour Division
U. S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20210
(202) 693-0062
dbra-faqs@fenix2.dol-esa.gov

**Common Construction Wage Hearings and Adoptions**
For questions concerning conducting a survey or scale enforcement, please contact:
Indiana Department of Labor
Wage and Hour Division
402 West Washington Street, Room W195
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 234-4681
ccw@dol.in.gov
customerservice@dol.in.gov

**Useful Web Sites**

[www.in.gov/dol](http://www.in.gov/dol) -- Indiana Department of Labor
[www.in.gov/dwd/2684.htm](http://www.in.gov/dwd/2684.htm) -- Indiana Department of Workforce Development Scales
[www.access.gpo.gov/davisbacon/](http://www.access.gpo.gov/davisbacon/) -- U.S. Department of Labor: Davis-Bacon Act