

# Introduction. How to Use This Guidebook

*This guidebook gives an overview of the California workers' compensation system. It is meant to help workers with job injuries understand their basic legal rights, the steps to take to request workers' compensation benefits, and where to seek further information and help if necessary.*

The information provided in the guidebook is true in most situations. However, the workers' compensation system is complicated. The guidebook does not fully describe many rules, exceptions, and deadlines that may apply to your case.

For example, if your date of injury was before 2004 or before the dates of injury listed in the different chapters and sections of this guidebook, your benefits and the steps you should take may be different.

Also, a union contract or a labor-management carve-out agreement may give you additional rights or require different procedures. (For information about carve-outs, see *How to Create a Workers' Compensation Carve-Out in California: Practical Advice for Unions and Employers*, listed in Chapter 11.)

**All workers**, whether or not you have a job injury, should read Chapter 1, The Basics of Workers' Compensation.

**If you are an injured worker**, you should read Chapter 2, After You Get Hurt on the Job. In that chapter, make sure to review "Keep Your Claim on Track" (p. 9) for basic tips on how to take charge of your case and protect your rights, especially if you are encountering delays or other problems in the workers' compensation system.

The following chapters cover different kinds of workers' compensation benefits, steps you can take to resolve problems with medical care and medical reports, and how to continue working for your employer. You can read some or all of these chapters, depending on your particular situation:

- Chapter 3, Medical Care
- Chapter 4, Resolving Problems with Medical Care and Medical Reports
- Chapter 5, Temporary Disability Benefits
- Chapter 6, Working for Your Employer After Injury
- Chapter 7, Permanent Disability Benefits
- Chapter 8, Death Benefits
- Chapter 9, Supplemental Job Displacement Benefits
- Chapter 10, Return-to-Work Supplement Program

Because this guidebook cannot cover all possible situations faced by injured workers, additional resources are listed in Chapter 11, For More Information and Help. Resources include government agencies, attorneys, health care providers, unions, and support groups, as well as books and other materials. You should use those resources to learn more about workers' compensation or to get personalized help with your case.

You can use the two appendices for reference. Appendix A lists Important Laws and Regulations that govern your rights and obligations. It also explains how to access the laws and regulations. Appendix B contains a Glossary that briefly explains many of the terms that are commonly used in workers' compensation.



*This edition of the guidebook describes the workers' compensation system as of September 2023. Workers using the guidebook should also check updates posted at the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) website: [www.dwc.ca.gov](http://www.dwc.ca.gov).*