

An Aging Construction Workforce: Recognition and Response

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The number of workers aged 55 and over is increasing, while the number of workers under the age of 25 is decreasing, according to the 2018 Current Population Survey. The construction industry may feel this more acutely than other industries, as workers in the construction industry tend to be older than those in other industries, the [National Association of Home Builders](#) has reported.

Workers under the age of 25 represent only 9% of the construction workforce in 2018, whereas workers age 55 and over increased from 17% in 2011 to 22% in 2018. Being alert to protections afforded age-protected workers under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), as well as requirements imposed under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and any similar state law, will help keep employers out of litigation and can allow them to adapt to an aging workforce.

The ADEA prohibits discrimination in the workplace of employees who are aged 40 or older. The ADA prohibits discrimination in the workplace against qualified employees who have a physical or mental impairment. The ADA also require employers to provide reasonable accommodations to allow disabled employees to perform the essential functions of their job. Employers should take steps to not only comply with these requirements, but also use them as an opportunity to encourage age-protected employees to continue maximizing their contributions in the workforce.

Reasonable accommodations under the ADA may include reducing or having flexible hours or restructuring workload and job duties. Such accommodations can help encourage skilled and talented age-protected employees to remain with their employer.

To show a company values the skills and positions occupied by an older workforce, employers may want to consider encouraging mentoring and coaching to allow older employees to pass on knowledge and expertise to younger, less experienced employees. Employers may also want to consider where they can maximize perceived maturity, networking ability, and higher levels of respect often seen in older workers. Options include creating new positions or modifying old ones. Finally, being in tune with the workplace ergonomic needs of employees, regardless of age, will not only help improve an employer's responsiveness to accommodation requests and reduce workers' compensation injuries, but also make the workplace one workers want to stay in. Also consider wellness or health programs on-site to encourage healthier lifestyles for all employees.

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