

## Ergonomic Rulemaking for Scheduled Airlines – Ground Crew Operations (Risk Class 6802)

### Q: Why is L&I doing rulemaking for ergonomics?

A: Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) are common in Washington State. They account for nearly one-third of workers' compensation claims that result in time-loss, also known as wage replacement. Ergonomics is the science that leads to the prevention of WMSDs.

The Washington State Legislature [passed a law](#) allowing the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) to adopt rules to prevent WMSDs. The agency may adopt new rules for only one industry or risk classification per year and the first rule cannot take effect until July 1, 2026.

Each November, L&I publishes a report of industries and risk classifications under consideration for rulemaking. To be included in the report, an industry or risk classification must have at least twice the statewide rate of compensable WMSD claims.

L&I narrows down the industries included in that report to a list of high priority industries or risk classifications most likely to be selected for rulemaking. From this list, L&I selected [scheduled airlines - ground crew operations \(Risk Class 6802\)](#), for the first rulemaking effort.

Read the [2023 report](#) and the [companion Q&A for more information](#).

## Selection for the First Rulemaking

### Q: Who would be affected by this rulemaking?

A: The rule will cover WMSD hazards for ground crew workers employed by businesses operating scheduled airlines assigned to the risk class 6802 in L&I's workers' compensation system. That includes baggage handlers, airplane maintenance workers, and ticket agents who handle baggage. Workers in subclass 6802-01 (hot air balloon – ground crew operations) are excluded. See [WAC 296-17A-6802](#) for a description of the risk class.

### Q: When would the new rules take effect?

A: The earliest date a new WMSD rule can take effect is July 1, 2026. For any WMSD rule, there must be at least 120 days between the date L&I adopts the rule and when it takes effect.

### Q: How did L&I select the list of high priority industries and risk classes?

A: To select ground crews employed by businesses operating scheduled airlines in risk class 6802, L&I

reviewed the November 2023 report, gathered stakeholder feedback, and narrowed the list to five industries:

- Grocery Wholesalers, [Risk Class 6407](#).
- Fulfillment Centers, [Risk Class 2103](#).
- General Line Groceries Retailer, [NAICS 42441](#).
- Skilled Nursing Facilities, [Risk Class 6108](#).
- Scheduled Airlines - Ground Crew Operations, [Risk Class 6802](#).

L&I sought input on the five industries at the WISHA Advisory Committee and the Workers' Compensation Advisory Committee, reviewed applicable data, then selected Scheduled Airlines - Ground Crew Operations.

### **Q: What factors did L&I use to select the ground crews risk classification?**

**A:** L&I made a holistic assessment and selected ground crew operations for the first rulemaking effort based on factors including:

- A rate of WMSD injury that was the highest of all industries and risk classes on the high priority list, at 47 compensable claims per 1,000 fulltime equivalent employees (FTE) or about 5 per 100 FTE. Workers in this risk classification suffer WMSDs at more than 10 times the overall state rate.
- A statistical trend showing the claim rate will continue to be more than double the statewide average in the next three years.
- Known best practices that point to possible solutions to common WMSD hazards.

### **Q: What are the common causes of WMSD injuries to airline ground crews?**

**A:** Common causes of WMSD injuries include:

- Lifting and throwing luggage and cargo.
- Repetitive placing, grasping, or moving objects.
- Bending, climbing, reaching, and twisting.
- Pushing or pulling carts or wheelchairs.

### **Q: How will L&I support the selected industry or risk class going forward?**

**A:** L&I will be offering assistance to this risk class and others through workplace consultations. To request a consultation, email [ergonomics@lni.wa.gov](mailto:ergonomics@lni.wa.gov) or request an [Ergonomics Consultation](#).

## Next Steps for Rulemaking

### Q: What are the steps in the rulemaking process?

A: L&I will follow [the three-step permanent rulemaking process as described here](#).

### Q: How will L&I develop the proposed rule language?

A: As outlined in the [Scheduled Airlines - Ground Crew Operations Ergonomic Rulemaking Roadmap](#), L&I will start the rule development process by gathering input from interested parties across all industries. We'll be asking for comments on what components of ergonomic rules might be consistent across all industry specific rules. Stakeholder discussions will also be scheduled with employers and employees in the Scheduled Airlines – Ground Crew Operations Risk Class to gather input on industry-specific issues, concerns, and best practices for mitigating WMSD hazards. After these initial scoping discussions, additional meetings will be held with all interested parties to discuss developing the rule language that will be specifically for the Scheduled Airlines – Ground Crew Operations Risk Class.

L&I will also assemble an advisory committee comprised of business and labor representatives to make recommendations on draft proposed rules.