

# TEXAS COMP

# UPDATE

## Inside this newsletter:



PAGE 3

### DWC's flood response

In July, DWC activated a comprehensive incident response system as a result of the devastating Central Texas floods. Learn how we came together to support our fellow Texans.



PAGE 5

### Join us September 29-30!

The Texas Workers' Compensation Conference is right around the corner. Get a preview of featured topics and speakers.



PAGE 6

### Hearings by videoconference

House Bill 2488 allows DWC to conduct contested case hearings by videoconference if all parties agree. Learn how DWC is implementing this new legislation.

## Stay connected!

Sign up to our different email lists to get news and updates geared toward:

- Health care providers.
- Insurance carriers.
- Employers.
- First responders.
- Designated doctors.
- Attorneys.

Make sure to follow us on social media for more workers' compensation-related content.



Texas Division of Workers' Compensation



TexasDWC



Texas Division of Workers' Compensation

## A MESSAGE FROM

# Workers' Compensation Commissioner Jeff Nelson

Dear Texas Comp Update readers,

Welcome to the latest edition of the DWC Texas Comp Update. Today, I'd like to share some recent restructuring changes we have made. These changes are designed to enhance our operational efficiency, align with our core mission, and deliver exceptional service to all stakeholders. Below are the key changes we've implemented:

**New Operations Program Area:** Under the leadership of Mary Landrum, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, this new team will drive strategic planning, manage major projects, and oversee budgeting, procurement, and contract administration to ensure seamless operations.

**Designated Doctor Operations:** Directed by Santiago Calderon, this program will focus on education, certification, performance reviews, and application processes for designated doctors and

medical quality review panels, ensuring high standards in medical evaluations.

**Health Care Provider/Return to Work Outreach & Education:** Led by Director Amy Rich, this team will enhance training on medical benefits and return-to-work programs while expanding outreach through initiatives like the [CompConnection](#) help line.

**Workplace Safety:** Now an independent program under new Deputy Commissioner Chris D'Amura, this team will continue its vital mission and reflects our focus on helping businesses keep employees safe.

**Business Process Enhancements:** Led by Director Martha Luevano, this area introduces:

- Legacy Modernization: A dedicated team to advance modernization projects, including a web-based dispute resolution system to simplify and automate processes.
- Designated Doctor Exam Services: Streamlining exam scheduling processes.

**Legal & Communications Services:** Under General Counsel Kara Mace, this program now integrates Communications, overseeing our website, messaging, and conference planning to ensure clear and consistent engagement with stakeholders.

These changes reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and our vision to maintain the nation's leading workers' compensation system. By enhancing our strategy, operations, and training opportunities, we aim to better serve you—our stakeholders—and ensure a more efficient, responsive, and supportive system for all.

Sincerely,



**Jeff Nelson**

Commissioner of Workers' Compensation

## Get free continuing education credit

DWC offers one-hour webinars throughout the year to help stakeholders earn free TDI general education credit. Join us November 5, 2025, to learn about employer responsibilities in the Texas workers' compensation system.

Learn more about CompCourses on DWC's [website](#).



**CompCourses**

# Compliance Corner: Communication is key



One of the biggest compliance issues DWC sees in the Texas workers' compensation system is **poor communication**.

Refresh your knowledge of our communication standards listed in 28 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) [Section 102.4](#) and follow these tips:

- You can send documents by fax, mail, personal delivery, or electronic transmission (like email) if the other party has agreed to it.
- Try all forms of communication! Letters and emails sometimes

just get forwarded. Always follow up.

- Don't just hit send and forget it. Make sure you're using an approved communication method and keep proof of how and when you sent it. Always document every contact you make with other parties, including who you talked to, when, and what was said.
- Use email when possible to maintain a written record. If you call, follow up with a quick email recap.

Learn more about compliance on DWC's [website](#).

## DWC's Central Texas flood response

In response to the devastating floods that swept Central Texas in July, DWC activated a comprehensive incident response system to help employees impacted by the disaster.

We created a new [webpage](#) with information on the workers' compensation claim process, safety resources for those helping with recovery efforts, and contact information for claim questions. DWC sent this information to our stakeholders through email, social media, and other state agency websites.

We deployed DWC Claims and Customer Services staff to the Kerrville Disaster Recovery Center. Our staff stayed in Kerrville for a month, helping residents and educating other local, state, and federal agencies about workers' compensation services and benefits.

"Traveling to Kerrville, we could still see the debris left behind by the flood," said Elizabeth Meza,



a DWC Single Point of Contact. "Volunteering at the Disaster Recovery Center was more than just doing my job—it was an opportunity to be present for the community."

We also distributed [flyers](#) with helpful DWC resources to disaster recovery centers across Central Texas, including those in Hunt, Georgetown, San Angelo, San Saba, and Burnet. DWC continues to monitor claims from the July

floods and will provide resources for those affected.

"I'm proud of our team's swift and compassionate response to the July floods, and of the support we provided to Texans navigating the aftermath," said Commissioner Jeff Nelson. "We will continue to stand with our communities, ensuring that every injured employee impacted has access to the resources and care they deserve."

## Upcoming events

**September 29-30** – DWC Texas Workers' Compensation Conference

**October 1** – 28 TAC Section 130.102 rule hearing

**October 3** – DD extent of injury webinar

**October 6** – DD case-based webinar series begins

**October 22** – Quarterly stakeholder meeting

**October 24** – DD 101 workshop

**November 5** – CompCourses: Employer responsibilities webinar

**November 7-8** – DD and certifying doctor required certification training

**November 12** – Essentials for New Safety Pros: Safety and Health Development Program webinar

**November 13** – Essentials for New Safety Pros: Multi-Employer Worksites webinar

**November 14** – DD extent of injury webinar

[See all events](#)

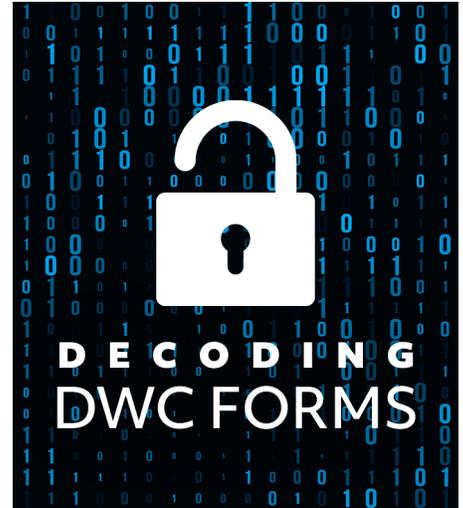
## DWC Form-073

### TEXAS WORKERS' COMPENSATION WORK STATUS REPORT

The *Texas Workers' Compensation Work Status Report* is critical in the return-to-work process. This form is completed by doctors or their delegated physician assistant (PA) or advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). Incomplete or incorrect information on this form can delay an employee's return to meaningful work.

To make sure this form is completed correctly, doctors (or delegated PAs or APRNs) should:

- Complete the form and submit it to the injured employee, employer, and insurance carrier according to 28 TAC [Section 129.5](#).
- Make sure Box 4 has the injured employee's description of the injury or accident, not the doctor's description.
- Fill out Box 13c to adequately describe why the injured employee can't do any type of work when the injured employee is taken off work completely.



- Choose "None" for Box 22 if the doctor has no follow-up visits planned.
- Encourage the employer to fill out DWC Form-074, *Description of Injured Employee's Employment*, to help the treating or referral doctor complete the Work Status Report.
- Review training videos on [Return to Work for Health Care Providers and the Work Status Report](#) and [Return to Work for Texas Employers](#).

## New OSHA classes available



DWC is proud to offer a robust lineup of OSHA-authorized safety training courses designed to help employers and employees build safer workplaces. We've updated our training calendar with over 70 courses for fall 2025 and spring 2026!

Whether you're in construction, the general industry, or just looking to

strengthen your safety culture, our free or low-cost OSHA 10-hour and 30-hour courses are available online and in-person. Courses are offered in English and Spanish and led by certified instructors with decades of real-world experience. You can register for:

- OSHA 10-Hour Construction course (free).
- OSHA 10-Hour General Industry course (\$30).
- OSHA 30-Hour Construction course (\$30).

Visit our [training calendar](#) to view upcoming sessions and register.



# Texas Workers' Compensation CONFERENCE

decoding comp



## LEARN

Get the latest on cutting-edge topics like AI and predictive analytics.



## CONNECT

Network with industry experts and over 50 exhibitors.



## SUPPORT

Listen to music at the Kids' Chance of Texas fundraising concert.

**29-30**  
**SEPT.**

Embassy Suites  
San Marcos, Texas

Registration: \$600

**REGISTER NOW**

Learn more: [bit.ly/DWC-conference](https://bit.ly/DWC-conference)



## Contested case hearings by videoconference

The Texas Legislature recently passed [House Bill 2488](#) to permit DWC to conduct contested case hearings (CCHs) by videoconference when the parties agree.

DWC Hearings has moved quickly to make videoconference CCHs a dependable, high-quality option without sacrificing fairness, decorum, or the integrity of the record. Our implementation plan ensures an efficient process without compromising the quality of the hearing.

### What we've implemented

To ensure a smooth transition, Hearings has standardized platforms, training, scheduling, notices, decorum protocols, and website materials, so participants know what to expect and judges can manage a clean record from start to finish.

#### Platform and training

- We issued a Zoom license to every administrative law judge (ALJ).
- We trained our ALJs and staff on Zoom platform

features, security, and hearing management.

- We updated hearing scripts to cover remote oaths, identity verification, exhibits, interpreters, and how to handle technology interruptions.

#### Scheduling and notices

- Our set notices now specify whether a hearing is in person or by videoconference.
- The set notice for a videoconference CCH includes the meeting link, dial-in numbers, and a link to more information.
- Participation by telephone remains an accommodation method—not a separate hearing type—and has clear standards to ensure audio-only participation is appropriate and documented in the record.

#### Decorum and exhibits

- Our day-to-day expectations are consistent.
- We use a virtual waiting room, display each person's real name on the screen, give guidance on labeling electronic exhibits, and

keep consistent filing timelines.

#### Website materials

- We refreshed our [website materials and FAQs](#) to help participants understand how to prepare for a hearing, request an accommodation, and learn what to expect on their hearing day.

### Request a videoconference CCH

Parties can request a videoconference CCH during the benefit review conference. If the parties agree to the videoconference CCH, our staff will set the hearing.

DWC Hearings monitors dispute resolution timeframes, attendance rates, and appreciates feedback from participants to confirm that videoconference hearings improve access and timeliness to dispute resolution while maintaining quality outcomes.

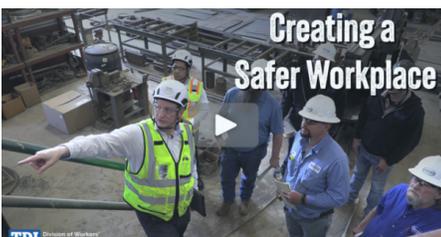
Learn more about workers' compensation dispute resolution on DWC's [website](#).



## Making Texas businesses safer

The Texas Occupational Safety and Health Consultation Program (OSHCON) offers free, confidential consultations to help private-sector employers proactively identify hazards, improve safety, and comply with OSHA regulations.

Though [Texas OSHCON](#) is partially funded by federal OSHA grants, we are not OSHA. We are a non-regulatory program designed to help private Texas businesses identify areas that do not meet OSHA safety and health standards. We don't issue citations or fines, and our consultation activity is always confidential.



Earlier this year we visited with Watco Tanks Inc. out of Floresville, Texas to hear about their experience with the Texas OSHCON program. Check out the [video](#)!

### Texas OSHCON services

Texas OSHCON services are tailored to meet the needs of businesses of all sizes and industries.

#### Services include:

- On-site and virtual consultations to assess safety and health conditions.
- Industrial hygiene services such as noise level monitoring and air sampling.
- Guidance on OSHA compliance, including training tools and recordkeeping support.
- Free safety training materials, including sample written programs, publications, and videos.

#### Good for business

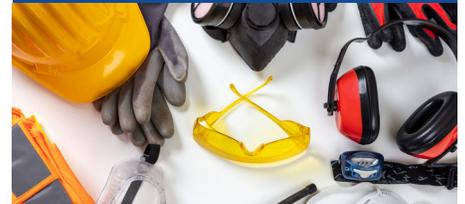
Over 1,500 Texas businesses use our services annually, saving them millions by identifying serious safety and health hazards that could cause costly injuries. A 2023 OSHA study estimated that the Texas OSHCON program saves employers almost \$115 million every year.

#### Book a consultation

Workplace hazards don't wait, and neither should you. Getting started is simple:

- Request a consultation on our [website](#).
- Call 800-252-7031, option 2.
- Email [OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov).

## Health and safety resources



### September – National Preparedness Month

- [Personal protective equipment \(PPE\) fact sheet](#).
- [PPE workplace program](#).



### October – National Fire Prevention Week (10/6-10/10)

- [Fire prevention safety fact sheet](#).
- [Fire safety workplace program](#).



### Cold weather resources

- [Cold stress prevention fact sheet](#).
- [Winter storm safety fact sheet](#).
- [Hypothermia fact sheet](#).

# 2025 Income benefits report

The Workers' Compensation Research and Evaluation Group recently released the 2025 Income Benefits Report, offering a look at how well income benefits replaced lost wages for Texas injured employees between 2015 and 2022.

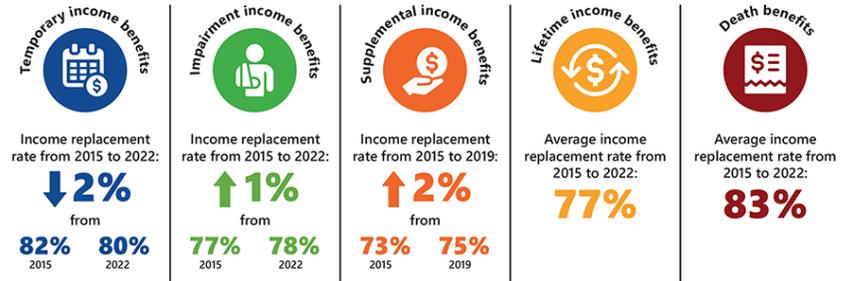
This analysis focuses on:

- Temporary income benefits (TIBs).
- Impairment income benefits (IIBs).
- Supplemental income benefits (SIBs).
- Lifetime income benefits (LIBs).
- Death and burial benefits (DBs).

The report also highlights the percentage and characteristics of injured workers who received the maximum benefits, with a focus on high-wage earners.

## Income Benefits in the Texas Workers' Compensation System

# 2025



## Key findings

Income replacement rates (IRRs) for all benefit types were relatively stable throughout the study period. The average TIBs IRR was 80% during the studied years – decreasing 2%, from 82% in 2015 to 80% in 2022. The IIBs IRR increased 1% over the study period, from 77% in 2015 to 80% in 2022. Similarly, the SIBs IRR also

saw a small increase, from 73% in 2015 to 75% in 2019. The average LIBs IRR was 77% and average DBs IRR was 83% from 2015 to 2022.

Read the full report on DWC's [website](#).

## ON YOUR RADAR

### KIDS' CHANCE OF TEXAS GOLF TOURNAMENT



You're invited to hit the greens on October 27 for a day of golf and giving! The 6th annual Kids' Chance of Texas Golf Tournament raises money to provide scholarships to children whose parent had a catastrophic work-related injury. Learn more on the KCTX [website](#).

### INJURY AND FATALITY REPORTS



Every year DWC, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, releases reports on Texas injuries, illnesses, and fatalities. Visit our website to see current [nonfatal](#) and [fatal](#) occupational injury and illness data and be on the lookout for new reports this year.

### HYBRID QUARTERLY STAKEHOLDER MEETING



In an effort to create more networking opportunities for our stakeholders, we are hosting a [hybrid quarterly meeting](#) on January 21, 2026. Join us in Austin or on Zoom to hear updates about DWC initiatives and meet and greet other industry stakeholders.