

Midwest construction industry hit hard by opioid epidemic

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A new report shows the Midwest construction industry is being hit particularly hard by the ongoing national opioid crisis.

“What makes construction so vulnerable to this epidemic is the physical nature of the work,” said report author Jill Manzo, Midwest researcher at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute. “Injury rates are 77 percent higher in construction than other occupations, and the financial incentive to get back to work before their bodies are healed is leading many down a path that can ultimately lead to abuse and even death.”

This report was created by the nonprofit Midwest Economic Policy Institute. It found nearly 1,000 construction workers in the region died as a result of this public health crisis in 2015. That equates to about a \$5.2 billion loss to the Midwest construction industry in terms of lost production, lost family income and other costs.

According to MEPI’s count, 92 construction workers died in Wisconsin from opioid overdoses in 2015. That’s more than the totals for Minnesota, Indiana and Iowa, but less than the totals for Michigan, Illinois and the worst state in the region for opioid overdoses: Ohio, which had 380 construction workers die from opioid overdoses in 2015.

The cost of those 92 deaths to Wisconsin’s construction industry was calculated at \$524 million — a little over 25 percent of Ohio’s \$2 billion cost.

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