

One-Page Guide: Labor Standards Interview



What is a Labor Standards Interview?



It is an interview (also referred to as an employee/field wage interview) conducted on the premises of a public works project by an entity enforcing labor compliance. The interviewer will ask construction workers general questions about their job and compensation. These are most often conducted by a contracting agency, but they might also be performed by a prime contractor looking to get ahead of potential violations that other contractors may make on their project.

What is the purpose of these interviews?

Although each interviewer might collect slightly different information, the main reason behind them is generally to verify that the data submitted on certified payroll is an accurate representation of the work performed out in the field. Because even though a contractor might appear compliant on paper, the jobsite can sometimes tell a different story.

When do agencies conduct field interviews?



It is up to the discretion of the agency. Per the Davis-Bacon Act, interviews are required of agencies. Many, however, will conduct them for their state or locally funded projects too. Contractors are not typically given notice as to avoid interfering with the integrity of the interviews.

What kind of information are interviewers trying to obtain?

They are mainly looking to see if contractors are paying their employees appropriately according to Davis-Bacon and/or other related prevailing wage laws. Some of the topics an interviewer may inquire about include:

- Basic employment information
- A worker's trade, experience, and job title (which may not be the same as a classification)
- Their classification, i.e., the scope and nature of the work they perform
- Which tools of the trade they may use
- Compensation and hours worked

How does this enforce compliance?



Interviewers record observations from the project site and document responses from workers. They then compare the information against certified payroll reports (CPRs) to see if there are any discrepancies or "red flags" that warrant further investigation. Some of these might include:

- 1 Wage rates and/or hours on CPRs that don't corroborate a worker's response
- 2 Crafts and classifications not matching the work being performed in the field
- 3 "Ghost" employees that appear onsite but not on CPRs (and vice versa)

The bottom line for contracting agencies

These interviews are vital to identifying violations that might not otherwise be caught by reviewing CPRs alone (some of which are among the most rampant mistakes across the industry). And they are even more crucial with projects that are multi-funded or have more than one construction type since they can have multiple wage determinations and therefore more room for error.

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