

California Dual Wage Classification Thresholds

2025 vs. 2026 hourly wage thresholds for all 16 dual-wage construction classifications, per the California Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau (WCIRB).

What Is the Dual Wage Classification System?

California divides certain construction job classifications into two wage-based categories — high wage and low wage — based on a worker's actual hourly rate. Workers paid at or above the published threshold for their trade are classified under the lower-rated high-wage code; workers paid below the threshold fall under the higher-rated low-wage code. Because better-paid tradespeople statistically generate fewer and less severe claims, the high-wage classification carries a lower workers' compensation rate.

2026 Threshold Table (Effective for Policies Incepting 9/1/2026+)

If the employee's documented hourly wage is equal to or greater than the threshold shown, the high-wage code applies. Thresholds are set annually by WCIRB and subject to change.

Description	2025 Threshold	2026 Threshold	Low Wage Code	High Wage Code
Masonry	\$35.00	\$37.00	5027	5028
Electrical Wiring	\$36.00	\$40.00	5190	5140
Plumbing / Heating / Refrigeration	\$32.00	\$35.00	5183	5187
Automatic Sprinkler Installation	\$33.00	\$36.00	5185	5186
Concrete or Cement Work	\$33.00	\$36.00	5201	5205
Carpentry	\$41.00	\$46.00	5403	5432
Wallboard Application	\$41.00	\$45.00	5446	5447
Glaziers	\$39.00	\$43.00	5467	5470
Painting / Waterproofing	\$32.00	\$36.00	5474	5482
Plastering or Stucco Work	\$38.00	\$42.00	5484	5485
Sheet Metal	\$33.00	\$37.00	5538	5542
Roofing	\$31.00	\$33.00	5552	5553
Steel Framing	\$41.00	\$46.00	5632	5633
Excavation / Grading / Land Leveling	\$40.00	\$45.00	6218	6220
Sewer Construction	\$40.00	\$45.00	6307	6308
Water / Gas Mains	\$40.00	\$45.00	6315	6316

Last updated: August 2026. Confirm current-year thresholds with WCIRB before binding.

Why It Matters for Your Premium

Employers who fail to document hourly wages for dual-wage class codes are audited at the low-wage (higher) rate by default. To secure the lower high-wage rate, maintain:

- Timecards showing start and stop times for each employee
- Paystubs that reconcile to those timecards
- Payroll records broken out by class code where an employee splits duties

Need Help With Your Classification?

Wellington Partners Insurance Services helps California contractors confirm the correct class codes, prepare for premium audit, and avoid dual-wage rate surprises. Use our free California Workers' Comp Class Code Lookup tool at wpisgroup.com/california-workers-comp-class-codes, or contact our team directly.

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