

# WA WORK

Film Portraits of Work in the 21st Century



WA Work is a series of short film portraits of workers that capture the meaning of work in their lives and the challenges they face in getting through each day safely. Each film is designed to tell a human story, creating a personal portrait of what it means to be a person working and trying to survive at this time as an American. The men and women featured in these films lead full lives – at work, with their families and friends, and in their communities. Watching, thinking and talking about these films will help focus our attention on the safety, health and humanity of a radically changed American workplace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the way work brings fullness to our lives.



Washington State workplaces have undergone remarkable changes in the past 50 years. The very nature of our core industries and businesses have been transformed and Washington State workers now encounter conditions and demands on the job, at home and in their communities never anticipated in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. 21<sup>st</sup> Century workers are less likely to work in manufacturing and more likely to be in the service sector. They are less likely to have stable, full time, long-term careers and more likely to experience temporary or part time work, independent contracting or work for temporary employment agencies or labor contractors. In addition, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workers themselves differ from those of earlier times. They are more likely to be over age 65, female, foreign born, or with limited English proficiency.

Only by understanding and adapting to these 21<sup>st</sup> Century realities will our labor and business organizations, schools and training programs, professional associations, apprenticeship programs, community groups and civic institutions reach their full potential. There have been few recent efforts to build the broad public attention needed for this to happen, but our shared American experience has repeatedly shown that powerful visual images can raise awareness and move people and organizations to active engagement in productive civic action.

With this challenge in mind WA Work has been designed to use powerful film imagery and personal stories as a way to stimulate discussions about work in America today. The following pages provide a guide for such discussions that would follow the screening of one or more of the six WA Work films.



## WA Work Discussion Guide

The WA Work films are intended to be launch vehicles for robust discussions about the place of work in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America.



Some of the target audiences for discussions include:

- Employer and employee organizations including trade associations, labor unions, apprenticeship programs workplace safety and health committees and others
- Educators and students from high school to postgraduate (public health, business, law, arts, journalism, political science)
- Journalists (current affairs, lifestyle, business, technology, employment policy, investigative)
- Public health, occupational safety & health and public policy professionals and their associations
- OSHA groups, think tanks and other advocacy/activist organizations interested in workplace policies
- Government agencies responsible for workplace safety and health, wage and hour policies, worker compensation, health care, labor relations and public safety
- Organizations interested in challenges facing the aging workforce or young workers
- Groups addressing the needs of injured workers, their families, friends and healthcare providers

Appropriate settings for these discussions include:

- Employee training programs
- Workplace safety and health meetings
- Union and trade association meetings
- Community forums on public policy issues
- Classrooms and seminars at all educational levels
- Professional conferences

There are two basic ways that these films can be used with any of these organizations or settings:

1. They can simply be used as a meeting opener to get people engaged and alert for the organization's regular agenda.
2. The films and their discussion can be the entire or major purpose or subject for the meeting.

In either case, the themes and questions that the films are intended to get people thinking about include:

- The place work plays in defining who a person is
- Opportunities for making work more safe, healthy and meaningful
- Barriers to making work more safe, healthy and meaningful
- The challenges of combining work life, family life and community life
- How work contributes to our health and safety – positively or negatively
- How the American workplace has changed over the years, even in our own lifetimes
- What work means at different stages of life
- How work shapes our community; what it means for our community and national agendas
- What are the values we bring to work and what are the values that work brings to us
- Are our values and behavior the same or different at work, at home, and in our communities

If the films are being used as a meeting opener, the meeting leader may want to pick one or two of these broad themes for a brief discussion as a transition into the regular meeting agenda. If the films are being used to open a more full discussion the leader will need a more complete plan with some specific questions to get the group involved. Here are some questions that can be used with any or all of the films, followed by specific questions for each of the films:

### **General questions**

- How does going to work affect a person's sense of self? How does it affect a person's family life or role in the community?
- Work can be dangerous. How does doing dangerous work affect someone's sense of self, family life, community life?
- In what ways have American workplaces become safer than in your parents' lifetimes? More dangerous?
- What are some of the opportunities for making work more safe, healthy and meaningful?
- What are some of the barriers to making work more safe, healthy and meaningful?
- Each of the films shows work with unique tasks, challenges, dangers and rewards. How are these similar to and different from your own experiences?
- Compared with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century workers in America today are more likely to be over age 65, female, immigrants, non-unionized, or with limited English skills. What does this mean for our society and our personal lives?

### **Questions for a Workplace Safety and Health Meeting**

- Washington State law requires "insofar as may reasonably be possible, safe and healthful working conditions for every man and woman working in the state of Washington." How would you describe the working conditions shown in these films? How do they compare with your own workplace?

- What are some of the hazards faced by the workers in these films? What might be some of the opportunities to reduce these hazards and the barriers to making them safer?
- What are some of the hazards faced by workers in your own workplace? What might be some of the opportunities to reduce these hazards and the barriers to making them safer?
- Most Washington State workplaces are required to have employer-employee safety committees or regular safety meetings. Does this happen on your job? Are they effective? What are their strengths and weaknesses? What might be done to make them better?
- If you could make your job safer or healthier what would be the first thing you would do? How could you get it done?
- What are some of the ways that work has an impact on workers in their families and in their communities?
- The workers in these films are proud of the work they do. How does this affect their families and communities? Is this kind of pride common or unusual for American workers today?

## Questions for Hydro Diver film



- How would you describe the work you've seen in this film? The rewards, demands, satisfactions, frustrations, and challenges? How do these compare with your own work?
- The divers work together as a team and depend upon each other for

their safety. Is this typical or unusual in America today?

- How does teamwork on the job affect the lives of the workers at home and in their communities?
- Commercial diving is extremely dangerous. Why are these divers willing to except the risks? What's done to protect them from harm? Who is responsible for ensuring they make it back home safely to their families?
- The diving crew has great respect for and faith in their supervisor, Vance. How has he earned this respect?
- What values and contributions do the workers at the dam bring to their families and communities?
- The divers in this film are proud of the work they do. How does this affect their families and communities? Is this kind of pride common or unusual for American workers today?
- The hydro divers in this film are unionized. What does this mean for them on the job, at home and in their communities?



## **WA WORK – Links**

### **Work in America**

- [Earl Dotter Photos of American workers](#)
- [The Atlantic Photos: America at Work](#)
- [Daily Mail Photos: American Children at Work](#)
- [Huff Post International Photos: Women at Work](#)
- [Boston Globe International Photos: The Big Picture](#)
- [Fortune Article: The Future of Work](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor Article: The Future of Work](#)
- [WORKSOURCE Washington: Job Search Tool](#)
- [Trade School Search Tool](#)
- [WA Department of Labor and Industries Apprenticeship Page](#)

### **Workplace Safety and Health**

- [Earl Dotter Photos of American Workers](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#)
- [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#)
- [WA State Department of Labor & Industries, Safety & Health Page \(DOSH\)](#)
- [Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission](#)
- [U.S. Chemical Safety Board](#)
- [AFL-CIO Workplace Safety and Health Page](#)
- [AFL-CIO Death on the Job Report](#)
- [National Safety Council Workplace Safety and Health Page](#)
- [Mark Catlin Link to Workplace Safety and Health Videos](#)

### **Hydrodivers and Other Commercial Diving**

- [OSHA Page on Commercial Diving](#)
- [WA DOSH Page on Commercial Diving](#)
- [The Commercial Diver Network](#)
- [The Underwater Centre Commercial Diving Video](#)
- [Careers in Diving - Commercial Diving Video](#)

## WA WORK Questionnaire

WA Work is a series of short film portraits of workers that capture the meaning of work in their lives and the challenges they face in getting through each day. By providing your reaction to these films you will help to make the project more successful.



Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of these statements regarding [name of film viewed]. Place an "X" mark in the box of your answer.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>1. I know more about this work than I did before watching the film.</b>					
<b>2. I would like to learn more about this work after watching the film.</b>					
<b>3. The film made me think about my own work.</b>					
<b>4. The film made me think more about workplace safety and health.</b>					
<b>5. The film would be good for workplace safety and health training.</b>					
<b>6. The film held my attention all the way through.</b>					
<b>7. The images in the film caught my attention.</b>					
<b>8. The sound quality in the film was good.</b>					
<b>9. I'd like to see a film like this about my own work.</b>					
<b>10. I'd like to see more films like this about other types of work.</b>					

**Q11: What was most interesting to you in this film (check just one)**

- The people
- The story
- The nature of the work
- The visual images
- The workplace hazards in this work

**Q12: I think this film would be a good part of ... (check as many as you like)**

- Workplace safety and health training
- New hire training
- A high school class on careers
- A union meeting
- A meeting of my trade association
- A community meeting on employment issues
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Q13: Was the film**

- Too short
- Too long
- Just the right length

**Q14: What did you like best about this film?**

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**Q15: What did you like least about this film?**

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Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us.

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