

85.34 Permanent disabilities.

Compensation for permanent disabilities and during a healing period for permanent partial disabilities shall be payable to an employee as provided in [this section](#). In the event weekly compensation under [section 85.33](#) had been paid to any person for the same injury producing a permanent partial disability, any such amounts so paid shall be deducted from the amount of compensation payable for the healing period.

1. *Healing period.* If an employee has suffered a personal injury causing permanent partial disability for which compensation is payable as provided in [subsection 2 of this section](#), the employer shall pay to the employee compensation for a healing period, as provided in [section 85.37](#), beginning on the first day of disability after the injury, and until the employee has returned to work or it is medically indicated that significant improvement from the injury is not anticipated or until the employee is medically capable of returning to employment substantially similar to the employment in which the employee was engaged at the time of injury, whichever occurs first.

2. *Permanent partial disabilities.* Compensation for permanent partial disability shall begin when it is medically indicated that maximum medical improvement from the injury has been reached and that the extent of loss or percentage of permanent impairment can be determined by use of the guides to the evaluation of permanent impairment, published by the American medical association, as adopted by the workers' compensation commissioner by rule pursuant to [chapter 17A](#). The compensation shall be in addition to the benefits provided by [sections 85.27 and 85.28](#). The compensation shall be based upon the extent of the disability and upon the basis of eighty percent per week of the employee's average spendable weekly earnings, but not more than a weekly benefit amount, rounded to the nearest dollar, equal to one hundred eighty-four percent of the statewide average weekly wage paid employees as determined by the department of workforce development under [section 96.1A, subsection 35](#), and in effect at the time of the injury. The minimum weekly benefit amount shall be equal to the weekly benefit amount of a person whose gross weekly earnings are thirty-five percent of the statewide average weekly wage. For all cases of permanent partial disability compensation shall be paid as follows:

- a. For the loss of a thumb, weekly compensation during sixty weeks.
- b. For the loss of a first finger, commonly called the index finger, weekly compensation during thirty-five weeks.
- c. For the loss of a second finger, weekly compensation during thirty weeks.
- d. For the loss of a third finger, weekly compensation during twenty-five weeks.
- e. For the loss of a fourth finger, commonly called the little finger, weekly compensation during twenty weeks.
- f. The loss of the first or distal phalange of the thumb or of any finger shall equal the loss of one-half of such thumb or finger and the weekly compensation shall be paid during one-half of the time but not to exceed one-half of the total amount for the loss of such thumb or finger.
- g. The loss of more than one phalange shall equal the loss of the entire finger or thumb.
- h. For the loss of a great toe, weekly compensation during forty weeks.
- i. For the loss of one of the toes other than the great toe, weekly compensation during fifteen weeks.
- j. The loss of the first phalange of any toe shall equal the loss of one-half of such toe and the weekly compensation shall be paid during one-half of the time but not to exceed one-half of the total amount provided for the loss of such toe.
- k. The loss of more than one phalange shall equal the loss of the entire toe.
- l. For the loss of a hand, weekly compensation during one hundred ninety weeks.
- m. The loss of two-thirds of that part of an arm between the shoulder joint and the elbow joint shall equal the loss of an arm and the compensation therefor shall be weekly compensation during two hundred fifty weeks.
- n. For the loss of a shoulder, weekly compensation during four hundred weeks.
- o. For the loss of a foot, weekly compensation during one hundred fifty weeks.
- p. The loss of two-thirds of that part of a leg between the hip joint and the knee joint shall

equal the loss of a leg, and the compensation therefor shall be weekly compensation during two hundred twenty weeks.

q. For the loss of an eye, weekly compensation during one hundred forty weeks.

r. For the loss of an eye, the other eye having been lost prior to the injury, weekly compensation during two hundred weeks.

s. (1) For the loss of hearing, other than occupational hearing loss as defined in [section 85B.4](#), weekly compensation during fifty weeks, and for the loss of hearing in both ears, weekly compensation during one hundred seventy-five weeks.

(2) For occupational hearing loss, weekly compensation as provided in [chapter 85B](#).

t. The loss of both arms, or both hands, or both feet, or both legs, or both eyes, or any two thereof, caused by a single accident, shall equal five hundred weeks and shall be compensated as such; however, if said employee is permanently and totally disabled the employee may be entitled to benefits under [subsection 3](#).

u. For permanent disfigurement of the face or head which shall impair the future usefulness and earnings of the employee in the employee's occupation at the time of receiving the injury, weekly compensation, for such period as may be determined by the workers' compensation commissioner according to the severity of the disfigurement, but not to exceed one hundred fifty weeks.

v. In all cases of permanent partial disability other than those described or referred to in paragraphs "a" through "u", the compensation shall be paid during the number of weeks in relation to five hundred weeks as the reduction in the employee's earning capacity caused by the disability bears in relation to the earning capacity that the employee possessed when the injury occurred. A determination of the reduction in the employee's earning capacity caused by the disability shall take into account the permanent partial disability of the employee and the number of years in the future it was reasonably anticipated that the employee would work at the time of the injury. If an employee who is eligible for compensation under this paragraph returns to work or is offered work for which the employee receives or would receive the same or greater salary, wages, or earnings than the employee received at the time of the injury, the employee shall be compensated based only upon the employee's functional impairment resulting from the injury, and not in relation to the employee's earning capacity. Notwithstanding [section 85.26, subsection 2](#), if an employee who is eligible for compensation under this paragraph returns to work with the same employer and is compensated based only upon the employee's functional impairment resulting from the injury as provided in this paragraph and is terminated from employment by that employer, the award or agreement for settlement for benefits under [this chapter](#) shall be reviewed upon commencement of reopening proceedings by the employee for a determination of any reduction in the employee's earning capacity caused by the employee's permanent partial disability.

w. If it is determined that an injury has produced a disability less than that specifically described in the schedule described in paragraphs "a" through "u", compensation shall be paid during the lesser number of weeks of disability determined, as will not exceed a total amount equal to the same percentage proportion of said scheduled maximum compensation.

x. In all cases of permanent partial disability described in paragraphs "a" through "u", or paragraph "v" when determining functional disability and not loss of earning capacity, the extent of loss or percentage of permanent impairment shall be determined solely by utilizing the guides to the evaluation of permanent impairment, published by the American medical association, as adopted by the workers' compensation commissioner by rule pursuant to [chapter 17A](#). Lay testimony or agency expertise shall not be utilized in determining loss or percentage of permanent impairment pursuant to paragraphs "a" through "u", or paragraph "v" when determining functional disability and not loss of earning capacity.

y. Compensation for permanent partial disability for an injury shall terminate on the date when compensation for permanent total disability for any injury begins. An employee shall not receive compensation for permanent partial disability if the employee is receiving compensation for permanent total disability.

3. *Permanent total disability.*

a. Compensation for an injury causing permanent total disability shall be upon the basis of eighty percent per week of the employee's average spendable weekly earnings, but not more

than a weekly benefit amount, rounded to the nearest dollar, equal to two hundred percent of the statewide average weekly wage paid employees as determined by the department of workforce development under [section 96.1A, subsection 35](#), and in effect at the time of the injury. The minimum weekly benefit amount is equal to the weekly benefit amount of a person whose gross weekly earnings are thirty-five percent of the statewide average weekly wage. The weekly compensation is payable until the employee is no longer permanently and totally disabled.

b. Such compensation shall be in addition to the benefits provided in [sections 85.27 and 85.28](#). No compensation shall be payable under [this subsection](#) for any injury for which compensation is payable under [subsection 2 of this section](#). In the event compensation has been paid to any person under any provision of [this chapter, chapter 85A, or chapter 85B](#) for an injury producing a permanent disability, any such amounts so paid shall be deducted from the total amount of compensation payable for permanent total disability. An employee shall not receive compensation for permanent partial disability if the employee is receiving compensation for permanent total disability.

c. An employee forfeits the employee's weekly compensation for a permanent total disability under [this subsection](#) for a week in which the employee is receiving a payment equal to or greater than fifty percent of the statewide average weekly wage from any of the following sources:

- (1) Gross earnings from any employer.
- (2) Payment for current services from any source.

d. An employee is not entitled to compensation for a permanent total disability under [this subsection](#) while the employee is receiving unemployment compensation under [chapter 96](#).

4. *Credits for excess payments.* If an employee is paid weekly compensation benefits for temporary total disability under [section 85.33, subsection 1](#), for a healing period under [section 85.34, subsection 1](#), or for temporary partial disability under [section 85.33, subsection 2](#), in excess of that required by [chapter 10A, subchapter III, this chapter, and chapters 85A and 85B](#), the excess paid by the employer shall be credited against the liability of the employer for any future weekly benefits due for an injury to that employee, provided that the employer or the employer's representative has acted in good faith in determining and notifying an employee when the temporary total disability, healing period, or temporary partial disability benefits are terminated.

5. *Recovery of employee overpayment.* If an employee is paid any weekly benefits in excess of that required by [chapter 10A, subchapter III, this chapter, and chapters 85A and 85B](#), the excess paid by the employer shall be credited against the liability of the employer for any future weekly benefits due pursuant to [subsection 2](#), for any current or subsequent injury to the same employee.

6. *Professional athlete.* For purposes of [subsection 2](#), paragraph "v", a determination of the degree of permanent disability of an individual who was injured in the course of performing as a professional athlete shall not be determined based upon employment as a professional athlete but shall be determined based upon other occupations the individual has previously performed or was reasonably suited to perform at the time of the injury.

7. *Successive disabilities.* An employer is liable for compensating only that portion of an employee's disability that arises out of and in the course of the employee's employment with the employer and that relates to the injury that serves as the basis for the employee's claim for compensation under [chapter 10A, subchapter III, this chapter, or chapter 85A or 85B](#). An employer is not liable for compensating an employee's preexisting disability that arose out of and in the course of employment from a prior injury with the employer, to the extent that the employee's preexisting disability has already been compensated under [chapter 10A, subchapter III, this chapter, or chapter 85A or 85B](#). An employer is not liable for compensating an employee's preexisting disability that arose out of and in the course of employment with a different employer or from causes unrelated to employment.

[S13, §2477-m9; C24, 27, 31, 35, 39, §1394 – 1396; C46, 50, 54, 58, §85.33 – 85.35; C62, 66, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, §85.34; 82 Acts, ch 1161, §8 – 11]

87 Acts, ch 111, §2, 3; 94 Acts, ch 1065, §5 – 7; 96 Acts, ch 1186, §23; 97 Acts, ch 48, §2; 98 Acts, ch 1061, §4, 11; 98 Acts, ch 1160, §1; 2004 Acts, 1st Ex, ch 1001, §10, 11, 18; 2005 Acts,

ch 19, §26; 2006 Acts, ch 1010, §45; 2008 Acts, ch 1032, §170; 2017 Acts, ch 23, §6 – 14, 24;
2020 Acts, ch 1062, §78, 79; 2021 Acts, ch 80, §34; 2023 Acts, ch 19, §1744

Referred to in §85.27, 85.33, 85.59, 85.60, 85.62, 85.70, 96.7(2)(a), 96.23, 279.40
Subsections 4, 5, and 7 amended