

Work Comp Roundup

Reduce Your Workers Comp Costs

Eliminate 20% Of All Workplace Injuries

Michael B. Stack · Wednesday, March 8th, 2017



Major drivers in workers' compensation programs continue to be injuries resulting from slips/falls and when working at heights. While these injuries will never be eliminated, employers can take a proactive approach to reducing their prevalence in the workplace.

Caution: Slippery When Wet

Injuries sustained from slips/falls continue to be the most common workplace incident. The result of this ongoing trend is that employers pay countless dollars every year in increased workers' compensation premiums for incidents that are preventable. Employers seeking to reduce their workers' compensation costs must become serious in addressing this issue.

The National Safety Council has opined based on research that slip/fall injuries account for over 20% of all work-related injuries in the United States. The actual impact is hard to quantify given the varying resulting injuries. These incidents can be as minor as a sprain/strain-type injury to severe trauma that includes traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) and back injuries requiring spinal surgery.

There are many common elements in any slip/fall workplace injury. These often

include:

- Liquid on the walking surface that was never cleaned up properly or in a timely manner;
- Cracks on flooring, carpeting, or uneven surfaces;
- Failure or of an employer to place required signage warning people of danger;
- Inadequate lighting;
- Exposed cables that result in someone tripping; and
- Stairs, ladders or scaffolding that is not properly maintained.

Employers and other interested stakeholders need to take proactive measures on this issue. Taking time to inspect visually a worksite is an important first step. This should also include measures where employees can report situations that are unsafe. Management must then take immediate corrective action to remedy the situation. Doing so creates a positive safety environment and forces employees to see value in safety measures.

Look Out Below!

Falls from heights are a frequent hazard that result in countless injuries. A majority of the injuries that occur while working at heights cause catastrophic claims. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, falls from heights in the workplace account for roughly 14% of all workplace deaths. It is also a frequent source of citations from OSHA. These mainly occur when work is performed on scaffolding and ladders.

Working from heights can never be eliminated in the workplace. Proactive employers

can prevent these incidents by taking the following steps:

- Educating all employees on the dangers working at height presents and how to be safe when working in these environments;
- Reducing the amount of time and number of employees that need to work on ladders and scaffolding; and
- Educating all employees on the use of proper safety equipment. This includes exercising caution before working at heights and using only equipment that is free from defect that fits correctly.

Management and other interested stakeholders need to be proactive on this issue. In many instances, this not only includes ethical obligations, but legal standards. This is also includes making sure employees are given equipment that works. Other steps include replacing equipment that is outdated or replacing something when it breaks. Quick fixes do not relay confidence in employees and may be illegal.

Conclusions

All employers must take proactive steps when it comes to a safety work environment and reducing the probability of work injuries. Two areas of focus should be in the reducing of slip/fall incidents and providing the proper equipment and training for those working at heights. The immediate benefits of following these best practices will be a reduction in workers' compensation costs.

For additional information on workers' compensation cost containment best practices, register as a guest for our next live stream training.



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