

Good Medical Care Reduces Lost Work Time

A study conducted in Washington State and published in the December 2011 issue of the American Public Health Association journal reveals that improving medical care for injured workers can substantially cut lost work time.

The study calls for “occupational health best practices” as the key to the “safe, healthy return of injured workers to full function and full employment.” Those best practices include filling out workers’ comp claims promptly, discussions between medical provider and employer about the worker’s ability to return to work or light duty, and regular assessment of the worker’s ability to perform work tasks.

Those workers treated by healthcare providers who used the recommended best practices cut their disability days by 19.7% and experienced a reduction in total disability and medical costs of \$510 per claim.

For more information, visit the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries at www.lni.wa.gov.

2010 Injury & Illness Stats

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ data for 2010, the latest available, the rate of nonfatal injuries and illnesses requiring days away from

work was 118 per 10,000 full-time workers, the same rate recorded in 2009. The median days away from work per injury – eight days – was also unchanged from the previous year.

The BLS noted some changes in 2010 over 2009 that were considered statistically significant:

- Women suffered 5% more injuries that required time off from work
- MSDs – musculoskeletal disorders – were up 4%
- Construction industry injuries requiring days away from work fell 19%

BCANJ Sponsors 23rd Annual Safety Awards

As we announced in Bulletin #07-12, BCANJ is sponsoring its 23rd Annual Safety Awards Program to honor members for their safety excellence.

Applicants who have made the greatest achievements in terms of lost workday cases with an incidence rate below the national average, as per the Bureau of Labor Statistics, will receive a plaque of commendation. A special award will be presented to contractors who completed the year with zero lost or restricted occupational injury or illness workdays.

Awards will be presented at BCANJ’s Membership Meeting luncheon on June 19, 2012, at Westwood at Garwood. In the 22-year history of the program, BCANJ has awarded 378 safety awards.

Risky Noise: OSHA Releases Stakeholders Report

A year ago we told you OSHA had abruptly dropped its plan to change workplace noise standards. Instead, OSHA began the painstaking process of collecting information from various stakeholders, including representatives from the construction industry, in an effort to determine what kinds of protections could be imposed without causing “unreasonable burden” on businesses, per President Obama’s order.

OSHA released its Hearing Prevention Loss Stakeholders Report late in 2011. The report contained two key issues pertaining to construction.

Impact vs. sustained noise. Impact noise may not increase the noise level beyond the so-called Time-Weighted Average (TWA), the average noise-level exposure over a certain length of time. But often, impact noise has been shown to be more harmful than sustained noise that measures close to the TWA. In fact, TWAs don’t cover the effect on a worker moving from a quiet zone to a loud one.

Other organizations recognize that. The ANSI standard, for example, created “task-based hearing protector requirements,” which call for hearing protection when performing certain tasks or working in certain areas. NASA uses instantaneous exposure levels rather than TWAs to determine protection requirements.

Best practices vs. rulemaking. The current OSHA hearing conservation standard doesn’t apply to construction. While it requires construction firms to have a hearing loss prevention program, it does not detail specific requirements as it does for general industry. Therefore, best practices for the construction industry “are in their infancy,” according to some stakeholders, and simply come down to ear plugs on the jobsite.

At the same time, “best practices” don’t do much to help small business operations, which describes the majority of construction firms, reduce

noise levels. Small-business representation among the stakeholders asked OSHA to “focus on ways to help...through rulemaking or guidance documents, not simply by listing best practices.”

Resolving the issues on your own. The Laborers Health & Safety Fund offers help that could resolve the issues raised in the OSHA meeting. On its website, www.lhsfna.org, the Fund offers its “living document” on noise control, an evolving Best Practices Guide developed in partnership with labor and management that strives for strong hearing loss prevention without putting an onerous burden on contractors.

BCANJ’s 2012 Schedule of Health & Safety Courses

BCANJ started off the year with the first of two planned First Aid/AED/CPR classes. The second class is scheduled for November. The Safety feature in our BUILDING CONTRACTOR Magazine, Vol. I-12, due out in April, will review the importance of a First Aid program and certified First Aid personnel in a company’s overall safety plan.

On May 21-24, BCANJ will host an OSHA 30-Hour Construction Safety and Health course. In October, the Association plans to host OSHA 500 and 502 courses to qualify or refresh those who wish to teach OSHA 10-Hour and 30-Hour courses.

Look for registration information for the various courses via e-mail and visit www.bcanj.com for updates and additions to the schedule. BCANJ-hosted health and safety courses are open to all members of BCANJ, BCAAC, FCINJ, Mill Shops and AGC of NJ.

For information on safety issues, regulations and training, contact BCANJ at 732.225.2265.