

Do you have an early-return-to-work program for your injured employees?



The longer an employee is off work following a work-related injury, illness, or disease, the more unlikely it is the injured employee will ever return to work. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports ...

- There is only a 50% chance an employee who is off work for SIX MONTHS will ever return to work.
- There is only a 25% chance an employee who is off work for A YEAR will ever return to work.
- There is a significant chance an employee who is off work for TWO YEARS will never return to work.

An effective early-return-to-work program can significantly reduce these alarming statistics and reduce your company's worker's compensation premium costs by decreasing disability periods. An effective early-return-to-work program is proven to reduce workers' compensation costs by:

- Accelerating recovery;
- Accelerating the employee's return by addressing the physical, emotional, attitudinal, and environmental factors that accompany extended time off work;
- Reducing frequency of costly medical treatment;
- Lowering permanent disability awards;
- Reducing attorney involvement;
- Lowering workers' compensation settlements;
- Improving employee loyalty and morale; and
- Enhancing the employer's image in the community.

To learn more about the benefits of an early-return-to-work program and how to implement one, please email wccentral@wbmi.com for your complimentary copy of West Bend's Early-Return-To-Work Program.

Key Elements of an ERTW Program

- A program statement
- Return to work letter
- Attending physician form
- Modified duty letter
- Supervisor investigation form
- Employee incident form
- Return to work log
- Job analysis form

Please reference the Early-Return-to-Work program from West Bend Mutual Insurance for more information.

“We don’t have any light duty jobs available.”

This is the most common comment we hear from employers. When it comes to light duty, an employer is only limited by his or her imagination.

All businesses have the potential for some type of modified duty jobs. Certain miscellaneous jobs need to be completed but they usually aren’t completed because there’s not enough time. That’s why an employer should keep a list of these jobs as the need arises ... because the day may come when they could be assigned to an injured worker.

Modified-duty work doesn’t have to take place at the employer’s place of business. An employer can temporarily place an injured worker in a non-profit organization, such as Goodwill or St. Vincent De Paul. This is better than allowing the worker to stay home and watch television. Remember: The longer an employee is away from the job, the less likely it is he/she will ever return to work.

Also keep in mind that modified-duty work must always be within the doctor’s restrictions.

Sedentary (requiring the employee to sit) Work Restrictions:

- Mentor and train new employees
- Take fleet vehicles in for oil changes and light maintenance
- Take vehicles through the car wash
- Clean computer screens
- Remove face plates from telephones and clean underneath
- Tip keyboards upside down to remove debris that falls between the keys
- Create or update safety manuals
- Develop a written Early-Return-to-Work program
- Review safety policies/procedures
- Develop safety training program to present to staff
- Create a disaster plan
- Study the OSHA website to learn why the accident/injury occurred and write up a safety paper to share with other workers
- Attend training or programs
- Paint the employer’s name on all hand tools and equipment; this is an anti-theft measure.

Other-Than-Sedentary Work Restrictions:

- Paint
- Light housekeeping/cleaning
- Fill soap dispensers in rest rooms
- Wash and disinfect lunch room tables and lockers
- Clean windows
- Paint concrete car stops in the parking lot
- Scrape and paint metal handrails
- Paint contractor’s equipment
- Yard cleanup and grounds work
- Spray weed killer on weeds that grow around the building
- Cut and trim bushes around the building
- Dust office furniture
- Record contractor’s equipment serial numbers
- Inventory
- Update MSDS binder
- Collect old/unused chemicals and dispose of properly

