

## **Returning to Work Safely**

Welcome back to work! Coming back to work after an injury means change. *PMA Companies' Claims has worked with you, your medical providers, and your employer to assure that you have a safe and productive return-to-work. Our Risk Control Services team offers the following strategies to help you with your safe return-to-work.*

### **Returning to Work Safely**

- Before arriving at work, make sure that you understand any medical restrictions you are under as a result of your injury and treatment. Knowing your physical capabilities will help you manage your job and avoid risk of further injury.
- Upon arrival, speak to your employer to learn about changes that may have taken place while you were away. Be particularly alert to new equipment and machinery, new work processes and changes to worksite layout. A change in equipment or a procedure can require you to work in a different manner than before your injury. Become familiar with safety instructions associated with any changes in the workplace. Adhere to the safety procedures associated with the changes.
- Request instructions on procedures and safety policies that you may not recall since being away from work. You may find yourself feeling like a new employee and it is better to ask for help than to assume you know how to do something.
- Keep your supervisor up-to-date on your progress.
- Make sure you have the necessary personal protection equipment for the job.

### **Returning from a back injury or other strain related injury?**

Follow your employer's safe work practices. PMA's Risk Control Services provides the following considerations to reduce the risk of injury from manually handling materials:

#### **Weight of Load**

- Seek assistance when loads are too heavy, and mechanical assistance is not available
- Seek to push or pull heavy objects using a mechanical device

#### **Center of Gravity**

- Shifts as items are lifted
- Hold items in front of and comfortably close to the body

#### **Load Stability**

- Moving around with an unstable item may result in fall

#### **Grip**

- Wear gloves for the hard to hold or sharp, angled edge objects

#### **Footing**

- Pre-plan your route and assure good footing
- Be aware of the terrain
- Avoid carrying objects on stairs or while walking on an incline

#### **How Often**

- The more repetition, more risk
- Manage the amount of time you are holding an object

### **Bending or Twisting**

- Places greater force on the spine
- Look to take a step when moving objects versus twisting
- Look to keep work in front of you

### **Your Health and Nutrition**

Take steps to help yourself by eating well and avoiding excess body weight. Maintain strong muscles and cardio health through regular exercise (working within the physical capabilities set by your doctor). Each day work to get enough sleep and reduce the potential for fatigue.

Take advantage of programs your employer provides to promote your health and wellness and stay active.

Be aware that you may not be used to the workloads upon your return. Prior to your injury your body may have been accustomed to a higher level of activity.

### **Your Work Environment**

- Take time to familiarize yourself with your work environment. Even if your job is the same as it was at the time of your injury, you may consider ways to work safely. Be aware of risk factors associated with your job to assure you are able to work in the safest manner.
- Follow the safe work procedures of your employer.
- Be sure you prepare yourself with the personal protection equipment your employer requires, including hearing and respiratory protection, safety glasses and personal protection clothing.
- Watch for physical hazards that could cause you to slip or trip.
- Make sure the lighting in the work area provides you a clean line of sight of the workstation and walking surfaces.
- Follow safe work practices associated with machine related hazards.
- If your job requires driving a motor vehicle or traveling:
  - Consider how your injury may impact your ability to drive or travel
  - Visually inspect the vehicle to be sure the vehicle is in good working condition
  - Pre-plan your trip and account for more time if your restrictions will slow your normal pace of work
  - If you travel long distances plan for appropriate breaks to perform prescribed exercises, such as stretching
  - Carry important phone numbers with you

**We welcome you back, and if we can be of assistance, please contact us through your employer.**

If you have questions regarding your specific transition back to work, please contact your PMA Claims Representative, or the PMA Customer Service Center, 888.476.2669.

### **About PMA Companies**

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*PMA Companies ([www.pmacompanies.com](http://www.pmacompanies.com)) provides risk management solutions and services in the U.S., specializing in workers' compensation for larger accounts. Headquartered in Blue Bell, PA, PMA Companies is part of the Old Republic General Insurance Group ([www.oldrepublicinsurancegroup.com](http://www.oldrepublicinsurancegroup.com)), the largest business segment within **Old Republic International (NYSE: ORI)**, one of the nation's 50 largest publicly held insurance organizations.*

*PMA Companies includes the **PMA Insurance Group**, specializing in workers' compensation and providing other commercial property & casualty insurance products; **PMA Management Corp. and PMA Management Corp. of New England**, providing results-driven TPA and risk services for workers' compensation, commercial auto, general liability, and commercial property.*

