

STAY SAFE BULLETIN

WORKERS COMPENSATION



First of all, here are some Alberta stats for 2011:

- Fatalities – 105 (workplace -28, MV-25, Occupational Disease-52)
- Number of lost time accidents accepted = 26,937
- Duration – 50% of lost time accidents are 5 days or less, average number of lost days per claim is 23 days.
- Main causes – Overexertion, falls, struck by object.
- Main body part affected – back strains.

Since most Lost Time Accidents are 5 days or less, employers should seriously consider instituting a Modified Work Program (sometimes referred to as “light duty”) where the worker is brought to work, if capable, and performs so-called “light duties” until they are able to return to their usual job. By employing this method, the employer can avoid considerable costs being applied to their WCB account which can have ongoing premium impacts for several years after the event. In addition, the employee is kept whole in terms of wages and is not required to deal with the WCB.

For those cases where the worker cannot return to work the next day, the claim is now a Lost Time Accident. In general, the following will occur:

- WCB creates a file for the worker and assigns it to a claims adjudicator. They will review the information from the employee, employer, and physician and determine whether or not it is an acceptable work-related claim.
- If the claim is accepted, the claims adjudicator will establish the compensation rate and issue compensation payment. A letter is sent to the worker and employer informing them that the claim has either been accepted or disallowed.
- The worker focuses on recovery and getting well so that they can return to work. The worker will receive various forms of treatment (recommended by their doctor), such as physical therapy. All treatments must be approved by the WCB for coverage of medical costs.
- The adjudicator oversees all aspects of the worker’s file and works toward rehabilitation so that the worker can eventually return to his or her original occupation. When this is not possible, alternate occupations or retraining will be considered.
- Finally, a non-economic loss payment may be given to a worker who has suffered permanent physical damage because of a compensable injury.

It is important for the company to keep in contact with the adjudicator and the injured employee. The employee’s supervisor, or the designated company WCB representative, should contact the injured employee on a regular basis to see how the person is doing. The company representative should maintain regular contact with the adjudicator and be up to date on the status of the claim.

