

**Council of Construction Associations**  
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Grant McMillan, President

COCA Update on WorkSafeBC Activities #491 October 29, 2010

COCA Column in Journal of Commerce

**The following column appeared recently in the Journal of Commerce.**  
**It is available online at: <http://www.joconl.com/article/id41206>**

**October 27, 2010**

**Column | Council of Construction Associations**

**WorkSafe BC reveals risk of future cost increases**

The claims numbers are in from WorkSafeBC and they reveal the risk of future cost increases for the construction industry.

After years of decreased assessment rates for most of the industry, there are some warning signs that rates will again start to rise.

The 2009 WorkSafeBC data shows some positive news, but it is overshadowed by one big negative.

The injury rate decreased by 22 per cent, to 4.6 persons injured for every 100 people at work.

This is excellent news and many organizations can share credit – the construction companies that focused on safety, the construction associations and WorkSafeBC.

But, the bad news is that the duration of claims (the average number of days that a worker is off work) has jumped 24 per cent, from 53 to 65. This duration number is driving up costs and will do so even more dramatically in

the near future, unless we act.

For now, the costs are blended, or averaged over several years, so the big jump will not immediately translate into sky-high costs.

We need to act now and we must improve our disability management.

Two actions are needed immediately.

We need to take advantage of a new program for prompt, safe return to work that is available at no cost from the CBI Health Group.

CBI's program is available in most parts of B.C. as part of implementing a successful return to work program in the construction industry.

COCA is a strong supporter of this initiative and began promoting it after discovering an earlier version was being used by several construction companies.

The concept is simple. When a claim is sent to WorkSafeBC, the average time before that claim reaches a WorkSafeBC case manager is 20 days.

For a construction worker, who receives about \$200 a day on a claim, that means that \$4,000 of the employer's money has been paid out before the case manager even starts to think about a return to work program.

That's where CBI comes in. Working with the contractor, they assist with a safe, prompt return to work program.

The CBI program provides immediate access to a doctor specially trained in return to work processes and to a physiotherapy assessment. There is direct, same day, communication with the employer to facilitate a safe return to work. This service is available to contractors, who register in advance with CBI. The company has an extensive network of medical care and rehabilitation centres across the province. This care plan is discussed with the worker and an employer representative, and passed on to the family physician and WorkSafeBC on the day of assessment, continuing with concurrent or additional treatment intervention programs as required. The success of the program depends on employers being committed to offering appropriate and meaningful modified duties, where necessary, to ensure

worker safety and facilitate recovery while on the job.

Employers are better able to make such accommodations when provided with the knowledge of worker abilities and limitations relevant to the job requirements.

There is no charge for this service, if the WorkSafeBC Claim is accepted. Fees will be billed to WorkSafeBC.

The second needed action is to call the Construction Nurse Advisors when you need their services.

At the request of COCA, WorkSafeBC has enhanced their program of nurse advisors by dedicating two to the construction industry. Nurse advisors can assist employers with return to work assistance, disability management and claim updates.

The major advantage of requesting this assistance is that the nurse advisor can directly access all WorkSafeBC files and deal directly with individual issues.

This is also free, as you are already paying for it with your WorkSafeBC assessments. More information on both initiatives is available through WorkSafeBC.

*Grant McMillan is the president of the Council of Construction Associations (COCA), which represents 21 construction associations and acts on behalf of the construction industry in WorkSafeBC matters.*

**NOTE:** The Construction Nurse Line is open Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm:

CALL: 604-279-8155

or

Toll Free: 1-877-633-6233