

Council of Construction Associations

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COCA Update on WorkSafeBC Activities #544 October 15, 2012

The following column from COCA appeared in the Journal of Commerce.

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Stay at Work Program Benefits All

View from the Board | Grant McMillan

The longer a worker is off on WCB, the higher the costs to the contractor. An effective Stay at Work or Return to Work program will do a lot to trim your workers' compensation expenses. If the injury allows the worker to remain at work -- with no time off -- then this should be your first choice.

Stay at Work requires that you have a job that the worker can continue to do within your company. This Stay at Work job may be a modification of the worker's job at time of injury -- if the modified parts of the job can be done safely and not slow down the worker's recovery.

In a Modified Plan, the physical demands of the job are reduced while the worker is getting used to the work effort and recovering from the injury. For example, the worker may be able to safely perform 75% of the work, but the other 25% of the duties may be beyond his capacity because of the injury; or, the worker may be able to lift or bend or stand within certain safe restrictions.

The worker's physician and WorkSafeBC should be able to define these limits; then you, as the employer, must make sure that the limits are not exceeded. The Stay at Work plan may require a different job, something that is productive and safe for that worker to do. Whether it is a modified job or a new job, have a written description of the job and its physical demands so that everyone understands what is expected of the worker.

Plan in advance by thinking about different jobs that could be done by an injured worker -- such as making deliveries, doing clerical duties, inventory control, small tool servicing, updating manuals, calling customers for feedback, checking on business leads, undergoing skills upgrade training, assisting with safety inspections. Of course, you need to match the worker's abilities with the job to be done. Being innovative with your thinking may open up new job possibilities.

Like any other business process, rehabilitation should be a planned activity. A California study of thousands of rehabilitation cases found that 84% of workers who completed rehabilitation plans returned to work. This is compared to only 45% who returned to work without a plan.

Stay at Work is by far the most effective of these rehabilitation plans. It is the best way to maintain the work connection and assist the worker back to the fullest possible recovery.

For help with Stay at Work planning, the Council of Construction Associations (COCA) recommends that you call the WorkSafeBC Construction Nurse Line at 1-877-633-6233.

The Nurse Adviser can look at all of the information on the claim file and give you a better idea about the nature of the injury. They can also let you know what sort of action on your part would be best.

My next column in this series will deal with the situation where the worker is injured badly enough that a Stay at Work program is not possible.

In this case, Return to Work becomes the strategy.

*Grant McMillan is the president of the Council of Construction Associations (COCA), which represents the interests of 16 construction associations in B.C. on WorkSafeBC matters. Grant is also a member of the Journal of Commerce Editorial Advisory Board. Send comments or questions to [**editor@journalofcommerce.com**](mailto:editor@journalofcommerce.com)*

The column is available online at:

[**http://www.joconl.com/article/id52290/--stay-at-work-programs-can-save-money**](http://www.joconl.com/article/id52290/--stay-at-work-programs-can-save-money)