

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Winter 2009-2010

community
Workers' Compensation

Worksite modification success story: Inventory/office

by David Onheiber

Worker disability

A worker hurt her back and neck and was unable to do her photo shop supervisory job. She is permanently restricted from lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling more than 25 pounds. She cannot use her hands repetitively at or above her shoulder level for more than five minutes an hour. She needs to change her posture often, and she lost some ability to bend her neck forward and backward and to turn her head from side to side. Her ability to bend her upper back forward is limited.



Work setting

The worker returned to work with her employer at injury as an inventory auditor. She inspects items that are stored from floor level to a height of about 15 feet. She removes merchandise stored on shelves that are 68 inches high. She sits, for up to six hours a day, at a work surface reviewing documents and using her computer.

Job obstacles

When the worker inventories merchandise, she must bend forward to inspect items stored at floor level. She has to bend her neck backward to inventory stock that is placed up to 15 feet high. When the worker sits at her work surface, she must bend her neck forward to read documents. Her chair doesn't adjust so that she can place her feet comfortably on the floor. She sits bent forward for prolonged periods.

Modification

A mobile platform was built to accommodate a camcorder and a monitor. The camcorder is mounted on an articulating monitor holder. The worker is able to inspect items at any level up to 15 feet by adjusting the camera mounted on the articulating arm and watching the monitor, which is placed so that she can maintain neutral head posture. The mobile platform also holds a safety step. The worker can use the step to remove merchandise from shelves, avoiding prolonged repetitive



use of her hands at shoulder level or above. She is able to move the compact mobile platform throughout the building without exceeding her push/pull restrictions. An ergonomic chair and a footrest were provided so that the worker can sit with her back and feet supported. The chair, footrest, a recessed keyboard tray, monitor arm holder, and document holder allow her to work without repetitive or prolonged forward bending of her neck and upper back. The employer eliminated some job duties so that the worker does not exceed her lift, carry, push, and pull restrictions.

Cost

The modification cost \$4,223.88.

Injury-caused limitations may justify worksite modification for regular work

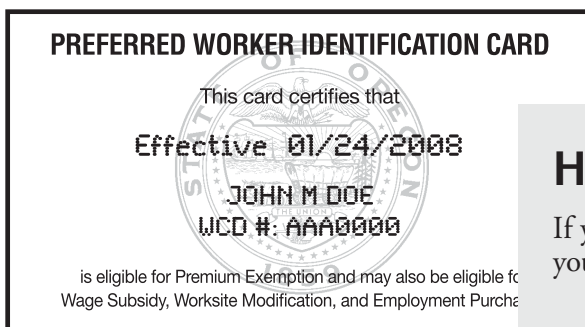
by David Onheiber

Did you know that preferred workers who are released for, or who return to, regular work may be eligible for worksite modification help? Preferred workers who return to regular work may also receive employment purchases and may offer their employers premium exemption and wage subsidy. Here is how it works. Usually, workers who return to regular work are not eligible for help from the Preferred Worker Program. However, sometimes a worker is released for regular work with limitations and is not able to do the regular job unless equipment is provided or the work process is changed

so that the worker can perform the job within the injury-caused permanent limitations identified by a medical care provider. A preferred worker and an employer who need equipment so that the worker can perform the regular job within the injury-caused permanent limitations may be eligible for worksite modification.

You can contact the Preferred Worker Program offices in Salem or Medford and a consultant will review your request. If you and the employer qualify for help, the consultant will work with you to determine what modifications

are needed. You may request premium exemption, wage subsidy, and employment purchases when you return to your regular job and the job has been modified or needs to be modified because of your injury-caused permanent limitations. A worksite modification consultant will determine whether the modification is needed. In summary, regular work that must be modified to allow a worker to perform the job within the worker's injury-caused limitations may qualify the worker and employer for Preferred Worker Program worksite modification assistance.



Have you lost your card?

If you can't find your preferred worker card, call us and we'll send you a new one:

Salem office:
800-445-3948
503-947-7588

Medford office (Southern Oregon):
800-696-7161, ext. 269

Preferred Worker Adviser is a publication of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Division. If you have comments or suggestions regarding this newsletter, contact Ana Contreras at 503-947-7523 or send e-mail to ana.contreras@state.or.us.

Administrator..... John Shilts

Re-employment assistance

Salem office..... 800-445-3948
Medford office800-696-7161
Web site www.oregonpwp.info



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Preferred Worker Program has worksite modification consultants and re-employment specialists; who does what?

The Preferred Worker Worksite Modification (WSM) consultants determine modifications needed to help an injured worker perform the tasks of his or her job, without exceeding the permanent limitations caused by an on-the-job injury. WSM consultants meet with the worker and employer to assess the job tasks and identify ways to modify those tasks.

You can request assistance from WSM consultants by calling, e-mailing, or faxing:

Salem

Bruce Friedrichsen bruce.c.friedrichsen@state.or.us 503-947-7574
Robert Williams..... robert.t.williams@state.or.us..... 503-947-7573
Timothy Kessel timothy.j.kessel@state.or.us 503-947-7576
Fax..... 503-947-7581

Medford

Heather F. Grogan heather.f.grogan@state.or.us..... 541-776-6032, ext. 269
Fax..... 541-776-6022

Re-employment specialists process requests for wage subsidy and employment purchases such as clothes, tools, initiation fees or union dues, occupational certificates licenses, placement assistance, and miscellaneous expenses. If you have questions about how to obtain these employment purchases, you may contact a re-employment specialist at:

Kerry King..... kerry.f.king@state.or.us 503-947-7577
Christy Johnson christy.l.johnson@state.or.us..... 503-947-7579
Jane Fernandez..... jane.e.fernandez@state.or.us..... 503-947-7539
Fax..... 503-947-7581

What is an ombudsman?

The Office of the Ombudsman for Injured Workers is the state office that serves injured workers by helping them understand their rights and responsibilities, investigating complaints, and acting to resolve those complaints.

The ombudsman is an independent advocate and reports to the Department of Consumer and Business Services Director Cory Streisinger.

The ombudsman's job is to advise injured workers in Oregon to resolve problems or complaints related to workers' compensation.

The ombudsman also serves as a resource to state officials and members of the legislature seeking claimants' perspectives on workers' compensation issues, as well as providing educational and informational seminars to labor groups, employers, insurance companies, and others interested in workers' compensation issues.

Although the ombudsman is not a lawyer, does not provide legal advice, and cannot represent injured workers at Workers' Compensation Board hearings, the office can help resolve disputes among parties.

The ombudsman's staff can give you straight answers about the following:

- Workers' rights and responsibilities
- Insurer rights and responsibilities
- Time-loss benefits
- Medical benefits
- Claim closure
- Litigation process
- Claim Disposition Agreement (CDA)
- Disputed Claim Settlement (DCS)

If you have questions regarding workers' compensation, contact the Ombudsman's office at 503-947-1871 or 800-927-1271 (toll-free), or send e-mail to oiw.questions@state.or.us.



Workers' Compensation Division

P.O. Box 14480

Salem, OR 97309-0405

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How do I use my preferred worker card to find work? ---

Effective Jan. 1, 2010, preferred worker benefits include \$2,000 for placement assistance. However, placement benefits may NOT be combined with vocational assistance services.

You may request placement benefits from a number of sources, including Private vocational rehabilitation firms, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs), or a private placement agency.

Contact any of the placement providers in your area and ask if they will provide job search assistance to you using your preferred worker benefit. For a list of private rehabilitation providers in your area, visit www.oregonpwp.info and go to the heading "Bulletins" in the grey sidebar. Click on "Bulletin 151," which lists all certified vocational rehabilitation counselors by city.

You may also contact your local OVRs, whose number is listed in the local phone book under "State of Oregon."

If you have questions call the Preferred Worker Program at the numbers listed below.

Salem office:

800-445-3948

503-947-7588

Medford office (Southern Oregon):

800-696-7161, ext. 269