

Changes for Workers Compensation Board Premiums

by Tom Coffyne, Ergonomics Consultant, EWI Works, Calgary, AB

The rising costs of an unsafe work environment...

The Workers Compensation Board (WCB) has announced that in order to ensure the long-term financial viability of the workers' compensation system in Alberta, they have been forced to increase premium rates by an average of 27.3% to \$1.68 per \$100 of insurable earnings for 2002. This means that industries such as trucking, petrochemical manufacturing, metal fabrication, sawmills and open pit mining will see premium rates increase between 32% and 41%.



To illustrate how these increases affect an organization, assume you use just the average industry rate increase of 27.3% and apply it to a large employer that currently pays \$200,000 in premiums. We see that the increase in 2002 will be nearly \$55,000 to a total of \$255,000 and will continue at that level, assuming there are no further increases to the WCB premiums. While this example is for a large employer, rate increases will impact companies of all sizes.

Fortunately, the WCB uses an Experience Rating Plan for determining the actual premium a company will pay when compared to other companies in their industry. This Experience Rating Plan can therefore earn an employer a 40% discount on WCB premiums. However, keep in mind (continued on page 3)

A closer examination of the new GSR: How will it affect you?

by Heidi Robinson, Ergonomics Consultant EWI Works, Edmonton, AB

In the last issue of the "Ergonomics Wire", we featured an article on the proposed changes to the General Safety Requirements of Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Act. The implementation of the GSR was reported to be early in 2002, but the process has been delayed and implementation is expected to take place later this year.



In the last issue, Sharon Goodwin indicated that Part 12 comprised the sections pertaining to ergonomics. Part 12 is divided into two categories, the first one dealing with "Lifting and Handling Loads", and the second "Musculoskeletal Injuries".

Let's look at a summary of these sections in more detail to find out what this means to you, how affects your organization, and what steps to take to ensure you are GSR ready.

Lifting and Handling Loads

Manual handling has been defined a lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, carrying, handling or transporting or heavy or awkward loads.

Need for suitable equipment

The employer must ensure that suitable manual handling equipment is available and is used, and that workers are trained in the use of the equipment.

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GSR Update (continued from page 1)

Adapting heavy or awkward loads

When the use of manual handling equipment is not reasonably practicable, the employer must minimize or adapt the handling of the load.

Assessing manual handling hazards

The employer must perform a hazard assessment before a worker engages in manual handling.

Preventing injury

The employer must take all necessary steps to avoid worker injury including training in safe manual handling methods.

Assessing the possibility of injury

The employer must assess the possibility of musculoskeletal injuries.

Identifying work-related causes

The employer must review the work activities and make changes to the work area if a worker reports symptoms of musculoskeletal injuries.

Musculoskeletal Injuries

Musculoskeletal injuries are defined as injuries to the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, nerves, blood vessels or related soft tissues. This also includes a sprain, strain, and inflammation that may be caused or aggravated by work.



EWI Works can help you get GSR ready...



Being in compliance may seem like a daunting task but steps and tools can be developed to address these regulations. At EWI Works, our focus is to determine the organization's needs. Customized processes and tools are integrated into current health and safety programs, while meeting overall health and safety needs along with legislative requirements. Through this process we have found that organizations have greater acceptance and ownership of these programs.

Specifically how can EWI Works assist you? We assist organizations to develop Corporate Ergonomics programs and policies, while supporting in-house health and safety professionals with the necessary tools.

Training Programs

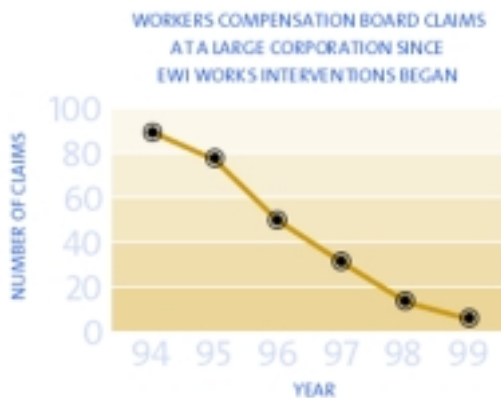
We develop customized in-house training programs including: ergonomics for health and safety professionals, ergonomics awareness for design engineers, training for in-house ergonomics teams, and ergonomics awareness seminars for employees.

Hazard Assessments

We can also assist organizations by conducting ergonomics hazard assessments. The assessment includes a determination of risk for musculoskeletal injury, solutions to reduce risk and prioritization of interventions. Solutions are assessed to determine if they are cost effective while reducing risk and are easy to use, ensuring the right type of equipment is installed. To find out how we can assist your organization please contact either our Edmonton office at (780) 436-0024 or our Calgary office at (403) 802-0886.

WCB Premiums Increase (continued from page 1)

that it could conversely mean a 40% SURCHARGE! Using the same company that will pay \$255,000 in 2002, we can calculate that their premiums could be as low as \$153,000 or as high as \$357,000. Clearly, a safe, healthy work environment translates into keeping work-related injury costs at a minimum, giving an employer a competitive advantage.



EWI Works has over 10 years experience working with local and international companies to provide safe work environments for their employees. We can provide a variety of ergonomic risk mitigation strategies that will impact your bottom line. Please contact our Edmonton office (780) 436-0024 or Calgary office (403) 802-0886 for further information.

In addition to conducting assessments, audits and teaching training courses with EWI Works, Tom assists with the continuing development of the EWI Works Website. Tom is also in the process of completing his Master's thesis in Environmental Design at the University of Calgary.

Zen and the Art of Gardening

Adapted and used with permission by AAROT from "Stressless Gardening" by: Gwen Berdan, BScOT, Occupational Therapist



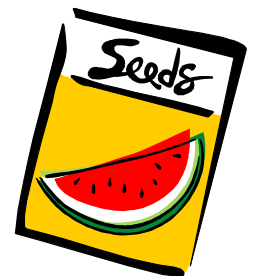
With the long winter finally gone, most of us are starting to think of ways to enjoy the great outdoors. Of the many summertime activities, gardening is a healthy, popular choice that reaps many rewards. Considered to be peaceful and relaxing, gardening is an excellent way to get fresh air, light exercise, and a bountiful fall harvest. But before you pull out the garden gloves and wheelbarrow, keep in mind the following tips to prevent any pain and fatigue that may dampen your day in the sun.

Pace yourself

- Work for an hour, then rest or switch to an activity that uses different muscles. For example, after mowing the lawn, do something new like pruning trees.
- Plan ahead so you spread your work over a longer period of time.
- Use a kitchen timer to ensure you don't work for too long.

Planting wisely

- Grow varieties such as beans and potatoes that require less weeding.
- Plant annuals far enough apart so you can weed using tools while standing, without getting down on your knees.
- Stake or trellis varieties like peas, cucumbers, beans and tomatoes to reduce bending and kneeling.
- Use planter boxes or a raised garden bed to minimize the need to bend and kneel. For example, some boxes are waist or chest high.
- Consider perennials. They will come up each year without your help and fill your garden with brilliant color.



Use gardening equipment to best advantage

- Install landscape edging and fabric covered with gravel or bark chips to reduce the time and effort involved in weeding around trees and shrubs.

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Zen and the Art of Gardening (continued from page 3)

- Use a watering wand to reach your hanging baskets or flower boxes.
- Bury soaker hoses in the vegetable garden so you don't have to move hoses around the yard.

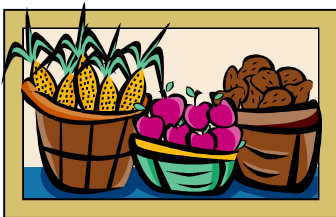
Try using the following tools that have been redesigned to make the job easier

- Lightweight aluminum trowels and forks.
- Curved handled shovels and rakes.
- Knee pads and kneeling stools.



Protect yourself from the sun and heat

- Protect yourself from sun and heat.
- Wear sun block and a hat at all times.
- Put on a loose fitting long sleeved shirt to keep you cool and protect you from the sun and insects.
- Keep cool and drink plenty of liquids, especially water, while you work.



Share the duty, share the profit

- Ask your neighbor to help dig the garden in exchange for fresh produce over the summer.
- Get someone to help you dig potatoes when they are ready, and then share the spuds.

Finally, some food for thought...

- If you're still growing enough for a family of six and there are only two of you, think about donating the excess to the food bank, women's shelter, etc.

Certified Professional Ergonomists for proven results.

What would you like to see in our next issue?

Whether it's ergonomic tips, the latest issues in ergonomics that impact your organization and industry, or where to find reliable sources for ergonomic information, send us your suggestions by email at lcook@ewiworks.com.