



Controlling Claim Costs Through Temporary Transitional Work

What can I do about claim costs once an injury occurs?

Once an industrial injury occurs, the employer can significantly influence the cost of the claim. The employer's willingness to provide temporary transitional work while the injured employee is recuperating can eliminate much of the wage replacement cost associated with a workers' compensation claim.

What is transitional work? Transitional work is temporary duty that is within an injured employee's physical limitations established by a doctor. In other words, it is work activity that the doctor believes is safe for the employee to do while the industrial injury heals.

Why is transitional work so important? The direct reduction in claim costs from avoiding time off work is only part of the savings. Providing temporary transitional work may avoid the creation of a "runaway claim". The longer an employee is off work the less likely it is they will ever return to their pre-accident job. What this means is that a relatively minor injury can quickly escalate into a very expensive claim. Fortunately, this claim scenario is often avoidable.

The key to avoiding this outcome is transitional duty. Transitional work can be provided in almost any work setting from heavy construction to office work. The transitional job must be within the temporary limitations the doctor believes are safe. If the employee is engaged in activity that is beyond his/her limitations, further injury may occur resulting in increased claim costs - the very thing transitional work is intended to avoid.

Every jurisdiction has its own definition of valid transitional employment. As an example, in the state of Nevada, the job must be substantially similar to the employee's regular job in terms of location, hours of employment and salary.* Your claims adjuster is your resource for facilitating transitional employment and can answer any questions you might have.

Transitional duty is a win-win proposition. The injured employee is able to maintain a sense of self-esteem by continuing to work. Most doctors agree that the employee participating in productive, safe, transitional duty enhances the healing process. The employer avoids short-term wage replacement claim costs and may also avoid long-term disability costs.

*Nevada Revised Statutes, 616C.475.

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