



BWC e-news – November 2011

BWC administrator, staff all in on return-to-work

Throughout 2011, BWC Administrator/CEO Stephen Buehrer has engaged employees and stakeholders to request suggestions for improvement. As part of that process, workgroups identified declining return-to-work as a real barrier to positive outcomes for injured workers and affordable rates for Ohio's businesses.

"After talking with stakeholders and reviewing data, it's clear we can have a serious impact on the lives of workers by focusing on getting them back to work sooner," said Buehrer. "It's equally clear that if we focus on better outcomes for injured workers, savings for Ohio's employers will follow."

Buehrer has cited a number of troubling trends related to return-to-work, including:

- Escalating medical and indemnity costs, with the average cost per claim rising at a much faster rate than other states across the country;
- Return-to-work numbers that have fallen from 75 percent of lost-time injured workers getting back to work within a year to below 69 percent;
- The length of BWC's claims tail is much fatter and longer than many other surrounding states and most of the country. In fact, eight years from the date of injury, BWC still has more than 45 percent of total claim costs left to pay out, compared to the nationwide average of 17 percent.

A number of employee workgroups met to address several areas identified as critical to addressing the return-to-work trends. These workgroups reached a number of general conclusions. They have made several suggestions for changes that could help get workers back on the job sooner and lower claims costs.

Buehrer recently shared with BWC employees some results of these efforts and discussed plans for the future. This includes changes to processes and rating programs. Buehrer highlighted several areas, all which focused on improving return-to-work outcomes by:

- Shortening the life cycle of claims;
- Simplifying the settlement process;
- Better engaging and measuring providers;
- Better aligning rating plans with BWC's return-to-work goals;
- Continuing to press forward with changes already under way in BWC's pharmacy program to reduce unsafe drug utilization.

While some details on specific process changes are still under development, one fact is certain: BWC leadership and staff are all in on return to work.

Moving forward, BWC will keep all stakeholders up-to-date as it implements changes. Watch for more news about reform in upcoming editions of BWC eNews.

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BWC Investigations Result in 13 Workers' Comp Fraud Convictions in October

BWC investigations resulted in 13 workers' comp fraud convictions and guilty pleas during the month of October. The cases are the result of the work of BWC's special investigations division to deter, detect and investigate workers' compensation fraud.

The cases bring total convictions in 2011 to 114.

Click [here](#) for more information on several of these cases.

Ohio businesses awarded more than \$200,000 to support workplace safety

BWC Administrator Stephen Buehrer announced 10 Ohio businesses received more than \$217,000 in safety intervention grants last month to improve workplace safety. BWC designed the Safety Intervention Grant Program to assist Ohio employers in reducing illness and injuries, and create a partnership with them to establish best practices for accident and injury prevention.

"Safety grants not only help employers reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, and their related costs, but a majority of employers report improved productivity and product quality," said Buehrer.

Ohio private and public employers are eligible for the grants, which provide a 2-to-1 matching amount up to a maximum of \$40,000 for a total of \$60,000. The employer contributes \$20,000 and BWC provides \$40,000. Quarterly data reports and follow-up case studies help BWC to determine the effectiveness of employers' safety interventions and establish best practices.

Click [here](#) to learn more about last month's grant recipients.

Visit ohiobwc.com to find out if the Safety Intervention Grant Program can help make your workplaces safer to reduce injuries and illness.

Ohio now has its first SHARP health-care facility

Last week, BWC recognized the United Church Homes/Trinity Community in Beavercreek (Greene County) for attaining Safety and Health Achievement Program (SHARP) status through the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA). The facility is the first nursing home in Ohio to achieve SHARP status since the program began and one of only 27 SHARP-certified Ohio employers. SHARP is an OSHA cooperative program for small, high-hazard employers. It recognizes employers by giving them a two-year inspection exemption.

"Achieving SHARP status places Trinity in an elite group of small businesses, and they deserve to be recognized as a model in the health-care industry for workplace safety and health," said BWC Administrator/CEO Stephen Buehrer.

BWC safety and industrial hygiene consultants worked with Trinity's management and staff for more than two years to implement changes in safety policies and programs. This collaboration helped them reach their goal of becoming SHARP certified. Changes included a "no-lift" policy to minimize manual resident lifting tasks using mechanical devices whenever possible. Also, Trinity created a safety team that hosts safety fairs not only for staff but for residents.

"The OSHA On-Site Consultation Program has been a wonderful process that not only has improved the safety of our employees but has provided the education and direction to continuously improve our safety program for the future," said Trinity Administrator Laura Farrell. "I highly recommend this program for any industry that truly embraces safety in the workplace."

Visit ohiobwc.com to learn more if you think your business has what it takes to be SHARP!

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