

## Mercer Community Hospital

**Intervention key words:** Transfer mattresses, air transfer and storage-transport units

**Industry:** Health care, hospital

**Risk factor(s):** Manual handling – pushing/pulling; manual handling – lifting/carrying; awkward posture – back deviations; awkward posture – shoulder deviations

**Situation:** Employees at Mercer Community Hospital filed 10 workers' compensation claims in a two-year period related to manually transferring patients and repositioning them using a draw-sheet patient transfer method. This method places workers in awkward positions and forceful exertions resulting in back, neck and shoulder injuries. The employees bend and reach while lifting, pushing and pulling a great amount of weight.

**Solution:** Mercer Community Hospital purchased transfer mattresses. Employees place these air mattresses under the patient. When transfer of the patient is needed, the mattress is rapidly inflated with air. Once inflated, employees can more easily and safely move the patient between beds. The total cost of the air mattresses, air supply, and storage/transport units was about \$47,000. Mercer purchased 16 air mattresses and 14 air supplies along with 14 storage/transport units.

### Results

- The incident rate (standardized per 200,000 hours worked) decreased from 5.2 the two years prior to the intervention to zero over the two years following, a 100 percent improvement.
- Using National Safety Council data on the average cost of a claim being \$19,382 the return on investment was 2.8 months.
- Fewer employees are needed to transfer patients to beds using the air transfer mattress allowing employees to provide care to other patients.
- The equipment vendor provided training for all affected employees on two separate dates. The employer videotaped the training so those employees who could not attend the live training sessions could view it later. Equipment was distributed once the training was completed.
- Patient benefits include decreased pressure to surgical incisions, decrease in pain/discomfort and skin tears.