



Controlling the Costs of Serious Employee Injuries

In spite of some companies' conscientious management efforts to prevent injuries, accidents continue to occur. When they do occur, it is important that your management team reacts quickly and knowledgeably to control accident costs.

Historically, a small percentage of employee injuries account for a very high percentage of the total injury costs for a business. A recent study showed that 10 percent of all employee injuries accounted for 70 percent of accident costs. While the percentage may vary, the trend is clear: To keep the total accident costs to a minimum, serious employee injuries must be well managed.

Management must respond to a serious employee injury in the following ways: get proper medical attention for the injured employee, investigate the cause of the injury, and take necessary corrective measures to prevent recurrence, clean up incident / accident area, and notify insurance company of the injury. Managements that take little forethought of accident costs rely on the insurance carrier for control. While insurance carriers will do everything within their ability to control costs, there are post accident steps that a company can take that will go a long way in reducing accident costs. What can the employer do to help minimize the costs of injuries to their employees? They can educate management teams in the following cost control techniques:

1. Make sure that the injured employee gets expert emergency care. In emergencies, call 911 for emergency medical services. Have someone accompany the injured to the emergency room, clinic, or doctor's office.
2. Report incident to the insurance carrier. In the event of a serious, or potentially serious injury, adjuster involvement, early in the process, can be very beneficial.
3. Do not discard any equipment involved in the accident that led to the employee's injury. Discard the equipment only when the insurance carrier has advised a management official that it is all right to do so. The equipment may be needed for legal matters.
4. When necessary, provide time for other employees who witnessed the injury to speak with insurance personnel.
5. Keep the lines of communication open with injured employees. Make regular contacts by phone or in person.

6. Show the concern of the company for their well-being. Send flowers, candy, or a card. Assist the employee in any matter possible. Make him or her feel missed.
7. Make sure the employee knows that a job is waiting for them upon their return. The job can be either their former position or another of equal pay.
8. Modify the job or put the employee in another "light duty" job to get those injured back to work faster.
9. Never accuse anyone of malingering. This will surely prolong the period of disability and could encourage the employee to seek an attorney.
10. Keep in constant contact with the insurance carrier. Advise them on the changes in the employee's health and how the accident investigation is progressing.

Following the training of management in these techniques, be sure to conduct an analysis on a regular schedule to determine if they are effective. A closely coordinated effort between company management and their insurance carrier will assure that injury costs are well controlled.