

New partnership offers greater support for forestry

FAQs

What's the purpose of the partnership?

The Truck Loggers Association, BC Forest Safety Council, and WorkSafeBC are launching a joint pilot program that's designed to help injured coastal forestry workers get back to work more quickly and reduce WorkSafeBC premium rates across the industry.

How will claims be handled differently?

Starting January 15, 2014, WorkSafeBC's Nanaimo-based claims team will handle all coastal forestry claims, providing a single point of contact for employers and workers. The team's dedicated case managers will help injured workers throughout their return-to-work process, using effective disability management skills to meet the unique needs of those in the coastal forestry trades. What's more, the team will expedite medical care, supporting injured workers to recover and get back to work safely, and as quickly as possible.

How can injured workers return more quickly to their jobs?

By decreasing the time it takes for forestry employers to file injury reports, we believe we can return workers to their jobs more quickly. A major focus of this pilot is to improve the timeliness of injury reports.

What do injury reports have to do with returning to work?

The two are interconnected. Before WorkSafeBC can make a decision on a claim, it has to receive three injury reports — one from the worker, one from the doctor, and one from the employer. If these reports are delayed, the injured worker encounters delays as well. Ultimately, these delays can hamper the worker's recovery and return to work.

How long does it take to receive injury reports from forestry employers?

Employers are required to report injuries to WorkSafeBC within three business days (this is a requirement of the *Workers Compensation Act*). In forestry, it takes employers an average of 21 days. This means forestry workers are waiting to receive benefits and recovery services and prepare for their return to work.



Why does it take longer for forestry employers?

Since 85 percent of forestry companies are small — with one to five employees — most don't have the resources to hire a payroll clerk, a human resources advisor, or anyone else to help them complete paperwork. As well, employers are often operating in remote areas, and have limited access to resources.

How is this affecting the return-to-work rate in forestry?

In forestry, it takes an average of 108 days for an injured worker to get back to work. However, the return-to-work average in all other industries is 60 days.

Why is a return to work important?

Getting workers back on the job after an injury helps them stay physically and mentally active, and it reduces the risk of chronic pain. Even with modified duties, people benefit from the support networks and social contact they encounter at work.

How can I submit injury forms to WorkSafeBC more quickly?

The BC Forest Safety Council has set up a toll-free hotline (1.855.234.6380) to help injured forestry workers with their claims. Both coastal employers and workers can call to ask questions about what forms they'll need, and what information they'll need to complete them. Hotline staff can also arrange to send forms to workers and employers by courier as needed, in pre-addressed envelopes to mail to WorkSafeBC.

How will the pilot help to reduce costs in our industry?

Forestry employers can save significantly, both in terms of "hard and soft dollar costs," by implementing effective return-to-work programs. By contrast, the longer people remain off work, the more it costs. Insurance premiums go up as a result. In addition to the premiums paid to WorkSafeBC, there are significant indirect costs, due to injuries and poorly understood disability management practices. These costs include lost productivity, rehiring, training, and overtime.

How long is the pilot?

The pilot will take place over two years: from January 2014 to January 2016. If the results show it's helped make a difference in workers' health and industry rates, then the model will be rolled out in the forestry industry across the province.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the BC Forest Safety Council's toll-free hotline at 1.855.234.6380.