

TOOLBOX SAFETY TALK

LIST ANY CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE REGARDING AN INJURED WORKER RETURNING TO WORK

EXPLAIN SUITABLE MODIFIED WORK

Suitable modified work allows an employee who is managing through an injury or illness to return to work while they are still recovering. Identifying suitable work involves the injured worker, the employer, health care providers, and the WSCC, all working together as a team. The modified works needs to be safe and meaningful. This means that the work should serve a purpose or valuable function to the organization.

Suitable modified work is not just any form of work. It needs to be achievable, safe, constructive, and productive. Modified work can include, but is not limited to:

- Changes in job tasks or functions;
- Changes in workload;
- Alterations to the work area and environment or the equipment used;
- Work normally performed by others;
- Cross training or job shadowing; and
- Work that needs to be done but the employer currently does not have a worker assigned to complete the work.

JOB DEMANDS ANALYSIS (JDA)

A job demands analysis is a priority step in assigning suitable modified work to a returning employee with an injury or illness.

A JDA documents:

- Essential job tasks *versus* non-essential job tasks;
- Equipment, tools, and supplies utilized;
- Physical demands (including strength requirements and postures);
- Sensory demands, Cognitive demands; and
- Environmental conditions.

A JDA highlights the strains of a job on the worker and identifies tasks that the employer must manage. Improving conditions and procedures for the worker who is returning to work reduces risk of re-injury. Employers may consider implementing the modification for all workers to reduce future risk of injury.

SAFETY OF ALL WORKERS

Above all, any modified work being selected for an employee returning to work needs to be safe for the employee and their coworkers.

For example:

John is an employee in the process of returning to work after a back injury. His doctor determined based on his abilities for him not to lift more than 20 pounds for a few weeks. Before his injury, John and his coworkers regularly lifted 50lbs. It would be unsafe for John's co-workers to try and pick up the slack by lifting the extra weight when John returns. Instead a JDA is performed which highlights tasks John can do in full, while making sure the other employees are kept safe too. A possible modification would be having another worker help him, obtain a cart, lift or hoist for 50 pounds, which would allow John to complete his work safely, without overloading his co-workers.

DEMONSTRATE

Ask workers to describe potential modifications to a position in the workplace. Is there equipment that would benefit everyone and not just an injured employee returning to work?