

FUTURE INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES



PREVENTING TOMORROW'S INJURIES TODAY

Preventing Workplace Injuries

By Dr Vince Portera, D.C.

Everyday organizations deal with worker injuries such as back sprains or strains, disk injuries, neck and shoulder injuries, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, and a host of other musculoskeletal disorders (MSD's). Recent data indicates that upwards of \$60 to \$80 billion are spent each year on such injuries. For example, the average cost of a back surgery is \$40,000. According to the Chubb Corporation it costs \$35,000 to \$75,000 for a carpal tunnel case. In addition, the indirect costs are staggering - estimated at three to five times the direct costs.

Unfortunately, businesses and their workers' comp service providers focus primarily on managing the injury and controlling the costs after the injury occurs. The prevailing thought seems to be "I cannot eliminate injuries, so I will try to control them."

The good news is, there is now a way to prevent tomorrow's claims. The emphasis can shift from "injury management" to "injury prevention" to the benefit of employees' health and productivity. As a bonus, workers' comp costs dramatically decline.

Learning by Doing, Not by Watching

Many companies in the past have instituted back and other injury prevention training that has proven largely unsuccessful. In fact, the New England Journal of Medicine incorrectly reported that "back programs" do not work.

However, most training programs rely on videos, lectures, handouts, or slide presentations. Although the information covered in these types of media is largely accurate and up-to-date, the long-term success and return-on-investment is questionable. Why? It is difficult to learn a true kinetic activity like lifting a box off a pallet or stocking products on a shelf from a sedentary medium such as a video. Learning a physical activity requires one-on-one instruction and physical practice of that activity.

Learning for Life, Not Just Work

Another issue to consider is the employee's "whole" life (24/7), not just their work life. A typical employee working 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year, or 2,000 hours per year, spends only about one-quarter of their time at work. The vast majority of time is spent away from work, at home, in recreation, or even on a second job. Whatever is taught must provide the tools and skills that can be applied throughout life, not just on the job.

The objective of a successful training protocol must be to teach people how to prevent physical stress, as well as how to relieve accumulated stress. And it must be information they can apply during all daily activities.

The question remains, how do you disseminate this information to your employees so they "get it" and it changes behavior? This is the magic formula. How do you get employees to buy-in and use the Backsafe or Sittingsafe principles in their lives for their own well-being? After training over 1 million employees we have the answer. These discoveries turn workers' comp costs from an uncontrollable problem to a significant source corporate savings.

In our economy we can no longer afford to take a reactionary approach to workers' comp. It is time to be aggressive and to stop claims before they happen! You are now in a unique position to do something about sprain/strain recordable injuries. We can help you to "prevent tomorrow's claims today"!

*This article may be reprinted in its entirety provided that the following resource is left intact:

About Future Industrial Technologies // FIT offers workplace safety and ergonomics training programs. Backsafe® teaches employees how to perform their specific job tasks in a manner that is biomechanically correct. Sittingsafe® teaches office employees how to adapt their existing workstations so they are ergonomically correct. These injury prevention programs make your workplace safer and are proven to reduce injuries and worker compensation insurance costs.

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