

Job Ready Services



March 2010

What's Good for Older Workers is Good for All

Just the Facts, Ma'am:

- Research says decline in physical abilities begins at age 40
- This year, 25.6 million workers are over 55 years of age

Average Age of Workers by Industry:

- Construction Workers – 39 years old
- Ford Motor Company Workers – 45 years old
- Miners – 46 years old
- Nurses – 50 years old
- Senators – 63 years old!

Ergonomic Considerations for the Workplace:

Vision – Typically, vision problems begin in the 40-50 age group, however recent research indicates this number is moving more toward 35-40. One reason may be the increased usage of computers and computer games at an earlier age. Print instructions in larger print. Provide proper lighting. Computer monitors should be 35” – 45” away from eyes. Increase lighting in areas where color distinction is needed. Improve visibility of stairs, hallways and close spaces. Use color to distinguish critical machine parts or safety valves. Increase font size on computer.

Hearing – Problems begin between 35 and 40. Difficulties include turning out background noises, inability to distinguish low intensity sounds/high frequency and difficulty locating the source of sounds. Reduce background noises in the workplace. Combine auditory and visual cues for such things as warnings and announcements. Being able to see someone speak allows the person to hear much better. Of course, use hearing protection in workplaces with excessive noise.

Smelling – As we age, the nerve endings in our noses decrease. Be aware of employees who may work alone in a



space and who may not smell smoke or other noxious, dangerous fumes.

Touching – Approximately 25% of older workers lose all sensation in their fingertips. Grasping is harder and takes more force. There is a decrease in joint mobility. Provide hand protection, substitute levers or push buttons for knobs, offer different tool designs depending on the job. For example, a barrel grip drill is much better for horizontal surfaces and a pistol grip is better for vertical surfaces.

Body Temperature Regulation – There are multiple variables affecting body temp regulation. There is no OSHA standard for body temp regulation – it's under the “General Duty” clause. In excessive heat, dehydration is the biggest concern. At greater than 77 degrees, tissue metabolism decreases – wearing more clothes may be preferable, as it allows the body to sweat and keep moisture in. However, drinking water is still necessary to stay hydrated. In extreme cold, manual dexterity decreases, peripheral circulation decreases and nerve irritability increases. Gloves are basic PPE, but ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL. Make sure gloves fit, because if they are too big, the worker will have to work much harder to grip items.

Physical Strength – Certainly our physical strength declines with age. Unfortunately, the job demands do not change. We just aren't able to do what we did 20 years ago, so, offering incentives to maintain fitness levels is a good idea. Fit for duty testing to determine whether the employee is safe to continue doing their job is ideal. If a problem is identified, the employee can be encouraged to “fix the problem” (maybe on FMLA) or enter a conditioning program to get them back up to the level of performing their job safely. Much better alternatives than allowing them to continue working unsafely and risk an injury.

Making modifications that protect the older worker is good business sense for ALL workers. Our aging workforce will have a significant effect on the costs of the employer, but being prepared for the changes is the best way to prevent inevitable problems from becoming costly claims.

A Success Story...

A recent Durham Herald article told the story of a police officer who was severely injured in the line of duty. He almost died after being shot in the abdomen when responding to a call at a townhomes complex in Durham. The shooter was sentenced after pleading guilty to assault with a deadly weapon. He was sentenced to 6 months in jail.

Damon Youmans is 31 years old, was a former New York City policeman and was still in training with the Durham police department when he was shot. After recovering from his injuries, he returned to doing some desk work at the police headquarters for several months. However, as the article noted, he is about to “shift gears.”

Mr. Youmans was slated to return to full duty police work at the end of February. He was interviewed by the Durham Herald and he noted **Job Ready Services** as the program that has helped him recover. Mr. Youmans participated in **Job Ready's work conditioning** program for just 16 visits. When he began the program, he was able to lift around 80 lbs. When he left the program, he was able to lift 125 lbs. His endurance was greatly improved and the apprehension he reported in the beginning of the program was virtually non-existent at the end.

Mr. Youmans received the Purple Heart for his courage and he is planning to complete the training that was shortened by his injury. He's looking forward to being back to full duty and we appreciate his service to the citizens of Durham.

Post Offer Employment Testing
Functional Capacity Evaluations
Work Conditioning
Fit for Duty Testing
Physical Abilities Testing
Ergonomic Analyses
Job Analyses
Ergonomic Training

Upcoming Events...

Lunch & Learn: Sincerity of Effort Testing

How can you objectively determine whether someone is being compliant with their rehab process? There is new testing available which is 99.5% reliable in determining sincerity of effort. Learn more about this cross-referencing testing program which is incorporated into FCE's.

Date: Thursday, May 20, 2010

Time: 12:00pm – 1:00 pm

Location: Job Ready Office in Raleigh

Speaker: Debra Lord

FYI: Job Ready Services FCE outcomes for 2008-2009:

72 valid (47%)

56 invalid (36%)

24 equivocal (16%)

Visit our booth at the following conferences:

NCAOHN at Atlantic Beach – March 17-19

EPC (case management conference) in Greensboro
March 17-19

Reminder: Early referrals for Work Conditioning could return the Injured Worker to work earlier and safer than waiting for an FCE that may turn out to be invalid. Work Conditioning is a daily program specifically designed to address work deficits.. If instituted early in the medical rehab of the IW, work conditioning results in a much increased likelihood of RTW.

Job Ready Services

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