SAFETY & HEALTH MATTERS

What’s New in Workers’ Comp?

By Peggy Sugarman, Workers’ Compensation Director

We are starting the new fiscal year with some exciting new organizational changes that will improve our services to the City & County of San Francisco.

In-House Claims Operations Expand: We have expanded our in-house claims administration program. On July 6, 2015, we took over the claims handling for the Human Services Agency and 19 smaller departments. New staff has been hired and we have begun the “Meet & Greet” process with the claims teams assigned to the departments. Should any of you wish to have an in-person meeting to discuss your claims or other issues of concern, please let me know. Excellent customer service is at the top of our “values” list!

Fraud Prevention/Detection Program: Workers’ compensation fraud detection has long been a focus of the DHR Workers’ Compensation Division. To supplement our in-house program, we have recently contracted with PROBE, a firm specializing in workers’ compensation fraud investigation, who will work closely with our Special Investigations Unit Supervisor, Edward Stone, and with the San Francisco District Attorney’s office white collar crimes division.

You can help us to identify fraud by reporting common “red flags” to us. Here are a few that should be reported to your adjuster:

- Delay in reporting an injury
- No witnesses or witnesses’ accounts differ
- Employee reports an injury immediately following disciplinary action, demotion, or other personnel-related problem
- Employee took unexplained or excessive time off just prior to the claimed injury

We are also implementing a surveillance program to identify medical provider/medical billing fraud in conjunction with the District Attorney’s office and other Bay Area claims administrators.

To report suspected workers’ compensation fraud, contact our Special Investigations Supervisor, Edward Stone at: (415) 701-5812 or send an email to: edward.stone@sfgov.org

TIME TO UPDATE YOUR IIPP!

Every department is responsible for developing and maintaining an Illness & Injury Prevention Program.

See Article on Page 2 for more information!
The Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) is a basic written workplace safety program. Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations (T8CCR) section 3203, requires every employer to develop and implement an effective IIPP. An effective IIPP improves the safety and health in your workplace and reduces costs by good management and employee involvement. The IIPP is considered by many safety professionals as the backbone of your safety program.

City departments must have IIPPs which are specific to the various work environments, to help maintain safe and healthful workplaces, and to comply with federal and state laws and regulations. The provisions of the IIPP should be communicated regularly throughout the agency/department. Many CCSF departments have professional health and safety staff available to assist supervisors and employees with safety matters and implementation of the IIPP. Smaller departments without health and safety staff may contact the Department of Public Health Occupational Safety and Health Section at 415-554-2797.

An IIPP that is compliant will:

- Identify the person or persons with authority and responsibility for implementing the program
- Include a system for ensuring that employees comply with safe and healthy work practices
- Include a system for communicating with employees in a form that is readily understandable
- Include procedures for identifying and evaluating workplace hazards including scheduled periodic inspections
- Include a procedure to investigate occupational injuries
- Include methods and/or procedures for correcting unsafe or unhealthy conditions in a timely manner
- Provide training and instruction
- Maintain records of inspections, investigations and training

Additional tools and resources:

Cal OSHA Illness and Injury Prevention E-Tool

Department of Public Health, Occupational Safety and Health Section:
415-554-2797

We hope that CCSF employees feel free to report unsafe working conditions to their supervisors. Departments are clearly doing a good job considering that we get very few anonymous reports.

You can timely address hazards and prevent injuries by ensuring that employees know that the hot line is available! The number to call is:

(415) 557-4999
SEIU OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, HEALTH & WORKERS’ COMPENSATION COMMITTEE

By Peggy Sugarman, DHR Workers’ Compensation Director

The Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the Service Employees International Union contains a provision for a Joint Labor-Management Occupational Safety and Health and Workers’ Compensation committee to consist of six union members and six members appointed by the Mayor. While this provision has been part of the MOU for some years, SEIU recently requested that the committee be formed in order to discuss a number of issues.

The management members of the committee include representatives of DHR, Department of Public Health, Human Services Agency, Recreation & Parks, and the Health Services System. I co-chair the meeting. So far, the committee has met on two occasions.

The focus of the committee is to provide a forum for labor to have input on issues of concern, including workers’ compensation and return-to-work, and to review and discuss such things as building safety, maintenance of safe worksites, safety of security personnel at “high risk” work locations, City vehicle safety, workers’ compensation education needs for employees in SEIU represented classifications, and to make recommendations to DHR based on industry and CCSF reports related to workers’ compensation. The committee is to make a report to the Board of Supervisors and the Union each September.

We are working to identify the priority issues for the next two meetings. In addition to doing a lot of listening, we have provided de-identified data workers’ compensation data to committee members on injuries and illnesses of SEIU employees by classification over the last three fiscal years.

Upcoming topics will include potential recommendation for education/training on workers’ compensation basics, employee safety for employees who work in high crime areas, the return-to-work and reasonable accommodation process, and examining data related to assaults upon employees.

To obtain more information about the committee responsibilities, see Sections 698 through 707 of the SEIU Memorandum of Understanding.

REMINDER! PREVENT HEAT ILLNESS

The recent warm weather is a reminder that Cal/OSHA requires employers to take four steps to prevent heat illness for employees working outdoors:

1. **TRAINING:** Train all employees and supervisors about heat illness prevention.

2. **WATER:** Provide enough fresh water so that each employee can drink at least 1 quart per hour, and encourage them to drink it.

3. **SHADE:** Provide access to shade and encourage employees to take a cool-down rest in the shade for at least 5 minutes. They should not wait until they feel sick to cool down.

4. **PLANNING:** Develop and implement written procedures for complying with the Cal/OSHA Heat Illness Prevention Standard.
Cal/OSHA Incident Reporting and Summaries Form 300A require data that can be difficult for departments to access and maintain, such as: whether the injured employee was treated in an emergency room or stayed overnight at an in-patient hospital; tracking the number of lost or restricted work days; or reporting the number of injuries by type.

While most of this information is captured in our electronic claims management system used by DHR’s Workers’ Compensation Division (WCD) and its contracted Third-Party Administrator, Intercare, it has not been readily accessible.

However, a recent upgrade to our claims management system should make it possible for WCD to generate much of the required information. We are accordingly working with our system administrator to create these reports. Once the work is completed, we should be able to generate regular reports to all departments to assist with these requirements.

How much equipment can you buy for $75,461? According to the California Workers’ Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau, that is the ultimate cost of a lost-time 2014 injury claim in California, over half of which is for medical care. While CCSF enjoys better results, the cost of one workers’ compensation claim can easily exceed the WC budget of the smaller departments.

Despite that reality, it is difficult for departments to embed and fund precautionary measures. Ergonomic consultations too often result in recommendations for expensive equipment which may never be used, or are used improperly.

A good ergonomics consultant will recognize the difference between what an employee requests vs. what will help to reduce repetitive stress that can lead to health problems.

**TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Select an employee (Supervisor? IT specialist?) who can learn about proper desk, monitor, chair, and keyboard positioning by sending them to the DPH Ergonomics Awareness Training.

2. Build ergonomic awareness into your on-boarding process by having that assigned employee meet with the new employee to adjust the work station and provide the employee with preliminary instructions on preventing repetitive stress injuries.

3. Send new employees to the Ergonomics Awareness Training given monthly by DPH.

4. Refer to a professional ergonomist for individual or department-wide assessments and training.

5. Always purchase adjustable desk chairs!

**RESOURCES**

DPH Ergo Awareness Info & Classes:

https://www.sfdph.org/dph/comupg/knowlcol/osh/ergonomics.asp

Two recently-approved ergonomic companies:

- EK Ergonomics, Ellen Kloosterman
  510-638-7039
  www.ekergonomics.com

- Diversified Management Group,
  Roberta Etcheverry
  800-746-4364

**ERGONOMICS: FOCUS ON PREVENTION!**

TO ACCESS ALL STATE WORKPLACE POSTING REQUIREMENTS AND FORMS, GO TO:

http://www.dir.ca.gov/wpnodb.html