

INCIDENT REPEATERS AND INCIDENT REPETITION PROGRAM

Cost of Repeaters.

Sizable dollar loss in workers' compensation can be attributed to repeaters, employees who experience a high frequency of accidents. Many repeaters show a pattern of multiple accidents with low dollar losses, before experiencing a serious accident that results in significant lost time and dollar losses. In their efforts to control workers' compensation costs, employers should, where possible, identify repeaters.

The typical repeater who experiences one accident, or even two accidents in a row, should not immediately earn the repeater label. Lowered job performance and work accidents can be the result of a number of life situations such as a death or illness in the family, separation or divorce, moving, problems with children or older parents, or a spouse who is laid off.

In other words, one should look at a typical employee experiencing an accident as just that. However, on investigation, one should try to turn up the root cause of the accident. After a second incident, it is time to look seriously at factors that may have decreased the employee's performance, alertness, or concentration.

Unfortunately, some employees discover they can benefit from getting injured, which consciously or unconsciously leads to their filing more injury claims. It is these employees who must be identified, counseled, and monitored to prevent them from filing gratuitous or even spurious claims

Not surprisingly, statistics show that approximately 15 percent of all injuries are repeater injuries. These most-at-risk employees will cost more than 50 percent of total workers' compensation payments. The cost-conscious company will train them, counsel them, and monitor them. It is essential to track employees on leave so that they remain "plugged in" and motivated. Employers can make visual, on-site inspection of situations that foster repeater injuries; even something as simple as work gloves can be modified for greater safety and fewer claims. The following characterizes the repeater psychology:

- A sense that workers' compensation is an entitlement;
- "The company will take care of me" mentality;
- A perception that management does not monitor performance or audit workers' compensation claims;
- Careless work habits;
- A poor relationship with management;
- Family or other outside stress that shows up on the job;
- A history of poor performance, illness, or injury;
- An unclear or incomplete understanding of company safety procedures and policies; and
- Lack of understanding that misusing workers' compensation can affect company profits and job security.

Above all, repeaters should be made aware that safety consciousness is expected of them as employees and is a measurable performance criterion. If employees sense their safety performance is being monitored and managed, claim incidents will fall. Repeaters should be handled as red-flag cases, that is, cases where steps for future prevention and early intervention in case of injury are of increased priority.

When you do identify the real accident repeaters, shine a spotlight on them, but not a negative one. Ask each accident repeater to review his or her own injuries and try to identify the root causes. This forces them to begin to take responsibility for their own behaviors.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Accident Repeater Program is two-fold. Primarily, it is to identify why accidents are occurring and to implement remedial procedures. Secondly, it is intended to provide a means of discussing accidents with those who have been involved in a given number of accidents over a period of time.

THINGS NOT TO DO

In the administration of a program such as this, there are considerable number of things which must be done. Equally important, however, are the things that must be avoided in order to assure success. Some of the things to be avoided are:

- Do not accuse the employee of any wrong doing.
- Do not threaten the employee.
- Do not deliver punitive damages (time off, lay off, etc.) to an employee merely because he/she was involved in an accident.

ADMINISTERING THE PROGRAM

Essentially, the program works as follows:

1. First, establish how many accidents a person should have over a given time period to be entered into the program (2 per year suggested).
2. Meet with all employees to explain the purpose and procedures of the Accident Repeater Program.

THINGS TO DO

1. Meet with individuals privately. (Group meetings on sensitive subjects makes everyone more uncomfortable.)
2. Explain the purpose of the meeting:
 - A. The company has been experiencing a number of accidents (detail cost, types of accidents, etc.)
 - B. It has come to light that a few individuals have been involved in multiple (2 or more) accidents.
 - C. Your goal, as the counselor, is to speak with everyone in that area or department to try and find out why accidents are occurring and what corrective actions might be implemented.
3. Discuss each of the employee's accidents in detail:
 - A. Back in _____ you reported an accident. Can you tell me how it happened? Let employee talk; do not interrupt.
 - B. As I understand it, this is how the accident occurred (in your own words repeat what you understand about the employee's accident). Is that correct?
 - C. If there are any discrepancies, clear them up at this point.
 - D. What can the company do to prevent similar accidents?
 - E. What can you do to prevent similar accidents?
 - F. (Repeat steps (a) through (e) for each accident).

4. Make/get commitments on things to be done so that future accidents might be prevented (action plan).

Examples:

Department	A	Provide all equipment necessary to do this job safely.
	B	Repair all equipment reported as being faulty.
Employee	A	Follow safety rules.
	B	Ask for help when needed.
	C	Report unsafe acts/conditions.

5. Explain again the purpose of the counseling session. Have the employee read and sign the confirmation of counseling form.

Allow the employee to add comments to the form if he/she wants.

If the employee refuses to sign the form, ask another person to witness that you have discussed the accident repeater issue with the employee. Have the witness sign in the employee's presence. It is not necessary for a witness to be present for the whole discussion.

6. What is described above is "performance management" and as such an action plan needs to be developed for the employee. As with all performance management processes, periodic review is required to be documented. For instance, the employee may be monitored specifically for the use of appropriate personal protective equipment and following proper safety policy daily. Then, every 2 weeks for 3 or 6 months a short, documented meeting occurs with the employee until the desired behaviors become habit. Meetings should be positive and focused. Performance management must follow established human resource policy.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR ADMINISTRATORS

It is important for Administrators in this process to take a step back and review the overall circumstances of the repetition of accidents. Do not overlook some potential root causes listed below:

- Have all employees in this department received the necessary training to do their jobs safely?
- Is the necessary personal protective equipment available and in good working order?
- Have employees been trained on when and how to use the PPE?
- Are all trainings documented?
- Are performance issues documented in the personnel file?
- Is the training done periodically through out the year and after any incidents?
- Is the supervisor or manager monitoring behaviors regularly and correcting behaviors as needed? Documented?
- Are the techniques and equipment, as described in documented training being reinforced regularly by management?

In some instances, the supervisor or department manager or even administrator is not reinforcing safe behaviors, not monitoring the employees, and not enforcing safety rules consistently. Here the supervisor or department head or administrator must be held accountable in writing with a specific plan of correction and periodic monitoring by the next level of management.

Acknowledgment of Counseling

EMPLOYEE'S NAME: _____ DATE: _____

JOB TITLE: _____

You have been involved in _____ work-related accidents over the past twelve (12) month period. As your employer, we are charged with providing our employees with a safe and healthful workplace. In order to fulfill that obligation, we met with you on the above date to discuss your accidents of:

As a result of our discussion, we have agreed to the following:

DEPARTMENT

EMPLOYEE

A copy of this form will be placed in your personnel file. By signing it, you make no admission of fault for your accident. This merely acknowledges that we have discussed the issues as noted above.

Employee	Date
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Date

Company Representative _____ Date _____

Date _____

Witnessed by	Date
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Date _____