

HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.

Workplace injury is on the rise in Nova Scotia's healthcare sector

For health workers in acute care, continuing care, and home and community care sectors the length of time between an injury and returning to work has increased every year for the last five years. Knowing that a strong, safe and healthy workforce is an organization's most valuable resource, health employers need workplace health and safety programs that do everything possible to prevent workplace injury; and if an injury does occur, to return injured workers to work in a safe and timely manner.

Industry Overview

Nova Scotia's health industry has the second largest payroll for the entire province and employs close to 50,000 people. Employees like nurses, continuing care providers and ward aides, lab technicians, food service workers, and environmental and maintenance staff are experiencing workplace injury at an alarming rate.

- 2006: Continuing care and home care agencies report a loss of more than 5000 working weeks.
- 2000-2006: Hospital employees suffer over 1900 needle and sharps sticks.
- * 50% of all health worker injuries are directly linked to moving and handling people and materials.
- * 60% of all health worker injuries are to the lower and upper back, arms and shoulders, and the neck.

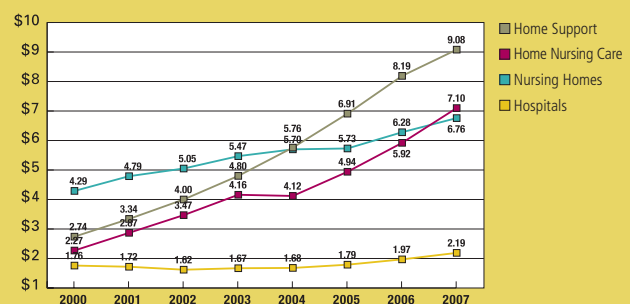
Workplace injury is preventable. It can no longer be accepted as part of a health worker's job.

Workplace Injury Is Costly

Your organization's history of workplace injury and the length of time that your injured workers are off the job directly impacts the insurance premiums you pay to the Workers' Compensation Board. And the indirect costs of workplace injury can be many times the insured cost. In healthcare, this may show up in the costs to replace injured workers and in the ongoing challenge of recruitment and retention of staff.

Injury rates and claim durations contribute to costs

ASSESSMENT RATES 2000-2007



WCB premiums will continue to increase unless workplace injury is reduced and injured employees can return to work in a more timely manner. Take a look at your company's annual Experience Rating Statement or go to www.wcb.ns.ca and register on 'My Account' to view your company's account information. How much is workplace injury costing you?

Where to Start?

Reduce your injuries and get injured workers back on the job. Doing this means you can reduce your premiums and amount of lost time. It's that simple. For help in getting started go to Prevention at www.wcb.ns.ca or call and ask for Prevention Services at 902-491-8950 or toll free 1-800-870-3331.

HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.

PHYSICAL HAZARDS

Does your work involve:

- exposure to infectious agents?
- exposure to sharps?
- working alone?
- working around or with agitated or aggressive persons, patients or clients?
- lifting, moving, positioning patients?
- lifting and moving heavy loads?
- uneven, unstable, or slippery work surfaces and areas?
- machinery with moving parts?

ERGONOMIC HAZARDS

Does your work involve:

- repetitive work motions?
- forceful motions of the back, shoulders, arms and hands?
- awkward working positions?
- equipment that vibrates?
- long periods of standing?
- heavy and awkward materials and loads to lift and transfer?
- difficult lifts, transfers and positioning required for patient/client care?

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Does your work involve exposure to:

- high noise levels?
- chemicals or toxic fumes?
- radiation?
- bio-hazardous materials?
- infectious agents?
- high levels of stress & fatigue?
- hazards in private homes and community settings?

PREVENTION

To control these hazards, assess and focus on:

- infection control protocols
- understanding and following safe work practices for sharps and using proper personal protective equipment (PPE)
- sharps stick prevention and protocols
- communication systems
- dangerous behaviour interventions
- mechanical lifts and safe lift systems
- ergonomic surveys of all working areas
- slip-resistant floors and work surfaces
- worker involvement in safe work design

PREVENTION

To control these hazards, assess and focus on:

- understanding and following safe work practices
- best practices for safe lifts and transfers
- required injury prevention training, ie. safe lift and body mechanics
- safe work practices and use of PPE
- proper maintenance of equipment
- hazard assessment of work areas and tasks
- appropriate equipment for lifting, moving, and transferring
- worker involvement in safe work design

PREVENTION

To control these hazards, assess and focus on:

- understanding and following safe work practices
- appropriate airflow and exhaust ventilation
- requirements for and provision of WHMIS training
- proper equipment maintenance
- appropriate PPE and individual fit testing
- rigorous infection control program
- suitable break areas and times for staff
- hazard assessments of all work areas, including private homes and community settings
- worker involvement in safe work design

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA

1 800 870 3331
www.wcb.ns.ca

**Nova Scotia Association
of Health Organizations**
www.nsaho.ns.ca

**Continuing Care
Association of Nova Scotia**
www.nsnet.org/ccans

**Health Care Human
Resource Sector Council**
www.hcsc.ca