

RETURN TO WORK



BACKGROUND NOTES

It is important to help an injured worker return to work as quickly as is safely possible. It has been shown that the longer injured employees are off work, the less likely they are to return. Staying connected to the workplace and continuing to work has proven to be one of the most important factors in recovery.

At the beginning of the video, Rod is hit by a car while on the job. He has a flash forward moment where he is forced to be off work for weeks. He didn't feel like himself, he missed his friends. He was discouraged and thought he may never be able to go back to work. His bills were piling up and he was feeling overwhelmed.

These types of fears and frustrations are common among people who must take time off work due to an injury. That is why it is best for the injured worker to get back to work as soon as possible, and for employers to have a return to work (RTW) program.

Rod talks to his boss about his workplace's return to work program. This program is key to Rod getting back to the job, and helps him avoid the stress he feared before.

Rod seeks recovery shortly after his injury. He works with his boss to find another role in the organization until he is ready for his original job again. Soon he's back to his old job.

As you watch this video, remember that a solid RTW program is a team effort. When an injury occurs, the goal for both the employer and the worker is to help get things back to the way they were before the injury.

QUESTION & DISCUSSION POINTS

Discuss your organization's return-to-work program.

Ask the group to discuss (if they so choose) their own experiences with leaving work due to injury, and efforts to return to work.

If injured, how would a return-to-work program help?

A return-to-work program helps to eliminate the stress and inconvenience an injury can cause to someone's life and their family. Together with employers, workers can make a plan to get back to work, while employers make a plan to accommodate the injury. Whether it's modified or alternate duties and schedules, or retraining for another job, a return-to-work program is there to help.

Did you know you can play a huge role in your own recovery by seeing a physiotherapist for an assessment of a sprain or strain?

Create a hypothetical situation for step-by-step scenario.

Eg: Dave reports injury to supervisor, if injury is a suspected strain or sprain, the supervisor can call the physiotherapist that day for an appointment for Dave. Dave can still follow-up with his family doctor, but the first contact with physio often means more immediate results for Dave's road to recovery. Click on 'Returning to Work' at wcb.ns.ca for more information about the WCB's physiotherapy direct referral program.

The video stresses the importance of getting back to work as soon as it is safe to do so. Why is it important for injured workers to return to work? Examples

- Reduces human impact of workplace injury (ie. on work life, personal life, social and community activities, etc.)
 - Allows employee to continue working, keeping valuable skill sets and knowledge
 - Reduces or eliminates employee wage loss
 - Employee keeps important social networks at the workplace, which support recovery
 - Employee stays active, which speeds up recovery
 - Minimizes lost productivity, at work and at home
 - Reduces risk of re-injury
 - Employee maintains a sense of value, purpose and self-confidence
 - List group's examples
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What are some ways you can return to work if unable to do your regular job? Examples:

- Transitional duties are temporary changes to the worker's job tasks that take their injury into account, but still allow the employee to be productive and contribute.
- Duties can progressively increase as the employee's function improves.
- The goal is to return the employee to full, pre-injury job duties.
- Employers and workers have responsibilities under the legislated requirements of return-to-work. *The Workers' Compensation Act of Nova Scotia* outlines the duties of workers in Sections 82 – 85 and the duties of employers in Sections 86 – 101.

CONCLUSION

- The longer an injured worker is off the job, the less likely they are to return to work.
- Returning to work in a safe and timely manner is supported when employers, injured workers, and health care providers work together. The Nova Scotia WCB can help too!
- There are financial and healthcare resources available to help an injured worker get healthy again.
- Staying active in the workplace is important, even if an injured worker isn't quite ready for their old job.
- Employers should share their Return-To-Work policies with employees and create a "buddy system" to help an injured worker stay connected to his or her workplace.
- Employers are encouraged to consult their Workers' Compensation Board case worker for more information on Return-To-Work programs.

Rod is a great way to begin the conversation about workplace safety. But he's just the start to a safer workplace. If you see a hazard in your workplace, be sure to report it to your supervisor – all hazards must be investigated.

WCB of Nova Scotia: 1-800-870-3331

NS OHS Division: 1-800-952-2687 or 1-902-424-5400

To learn more, visit worksafeforlife.ca and someways.ca

