

## Hackensack Meridian Works

### The Connection Between New Hires and Workers' Compensation Costs



Employees at the most significant risk of injury aren't necessarily the youngest, the oldest, the rule-breakers, or even the left-handed. Who is most susceptible to getting hurt? New hires.

According to the 2024 Travelers Injury Impact Report, new employees are five times more likely to be hurt than their experienced colleagues. First-year employees experience 35% of workplace injuries, resulting in 32% of costs associated with workers' compensation claims.

"Lack of experience is a big factor," says Robert Mikita, Hackensack *Meridian* Health's [Workers' Compensation Program manager](#). "Also, lack of training if they weren't onboarded correctly."

For some new hires, unfamiliarity with company protocols leads to injury.

"You might be experienced, but you're in a new environment," Mikita says. "Experience doesn't mean you won't have an incident at a new company."

Other new employees may hurt themselves by being too eager to please their managers.

"You might try to accomplish things faster or rush to get things done by a deadline, not as being as safe as you could," Mikita says.

Injuries among new employees decrease company productivity through absenteeism and presenteeism if new hires continue going to work although they can't effectively complete their responsibilities.

"They might be afraid to report an injury to their boss because they fear that they might not be viewed as a reliable employee," Mikita says.

Employers can adopt strategies to help decrease injuries among all workers, including new hires. Everyone benefits: Employees work more efficiently in safer environments, and companies maintain or increase productivity levels without their workers' compensation insurance rates rising.

These approaches may help employers decrease the risk of injury among new employees:

### **Prioritize safety training**

Comprehensive safety training can help reduce the number of company-wide injuries among all employees, including new hires. But only 20% of new employees receive on-the-job safety training, according to the Institute for Work & Health.

Safety training should teach employees about job hazards, proper safety procedures and how to report injuries. For the greatest impact, safety training should begin when employees are hired.

"How a company onboards its new hires sets the tone," Mikita says. "There should be new-hire training, with a heavy focus on how to make things safer for them, then continuing education for current employees."

### **Track injuries by type and length of service**

Employers can create a digital dashboard to track company-wide injuries or assemble a team to examine the incidence of on-the-job injuries.

"Data analysis is key," Mikita says. "Identify the cause of injury, the type of injury, where it's happening and the seniority level of the injured individuals."

Injury statistics help companies determine if new hires or long-time employees need additional training.

"Just because you've been there for 10 years doesn't mean you're not susceptible to injuries; you might develop bad habits," Mikita says. "Once we target a problem, we can start re-education and re-training."

### **Assign mentors to new hires**

Pairing new hires with more experienced employees may help decrease injuries.

“Somebody that performs the same job as you, who knows the job requirements and the proper protocols, can mentor that new person to make sure they follow the protocols,” Mikita says. “It can help alleviate new hires having accidents.”

Employee mentors can serve as role models, answer questions about safety procedures and provide support to their newest colleagues.

**Institute a culture of safety**

Companies that make safety a core value are more likely to decrease injuries among all workers, including new hires. Introducing safety-related messaging early is most effective.

“A culture of safety starts with management,” Mikita says. “It helps new hires to have constant communication with the manager, if they have questions, or to ensure that they are doing tasks properly. Managers need to be hands-on right away, so the new hire realizes that you take workplace injuries very seriously.”