

# Work Comp Insights

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## The Importance of Communicating With Employees During Workers' Compensation Claims

Employees who face work-related injuries and illnesses commonly have subsequent stress and anxiety. Oftentimes, this stress is made worse should employers stop communicating with the employee while they're unable to work.

It is important for employers to make their employees feel appreciated and to invest in their well-being. This rapport helps employees feel welcomed, valued and trusted. As a result, if employees are injured at work, they are much more likely to report accidents and injuries.

Furthermore, lack of communication with employees can increase their workers' compensation claim costs. Injured employees are more likely to hire attorneys if they have a poor understanding of the workers' compensation claims process and a nonexistent relationship with their employer. Employers can avoid this by forming trusted relationships with their workers and creating an environment where the lines of communication are open. It is important that employees feel supported, particularly following workplace injuries. This shows employees they are valued and, at the

same time, reduces their workers' compensation costs.

### When Should the Communication Begin?

As a part of the onboarding process, employees should be trained on what to do in the event they experience a work-related injury or illness, including what the organization's workers' compensation protocols entail.

Employers should discuss how to report an injury and inform employees that communications will continue throughout the course of treatment of that injury. By setting expectations upfront, employers can facilitate ongoing communication, which helps foster these important relationships.

From the moment a workplace injury occurs until the injured employee returns to work, employers and employees should be able to communicate with each other. In general, following an injury, communication begins with employers, and they should:

- Explore what happened immediately following an injury. Employers should be empathetic toward injured employees and discuss what led to the injury.
- Give injured employees the information they need regarding who to contact with questions and how they can check on their claim status.
- Check in with employees to see how treatment is going and if their doctor is being supportive.



- Discuss wage replacement and how it works with injured employees.
- Discuss how long injured employees need to wait until they receive a benefit paycheck.
- Explain that a workers' compensation adjuster will call to review the injury. It's also important to let employees know that this is a standard procedure for insurance claims.
- Discuss return-to-work options so injured employees clearly understand their options when that time arrives.

### Follow-up Communications

At least every other week, employers should reach out to injured employees to check in on them. Key times to touch base include after surgery and scheduled treatments. It's important to reassure injured employees that you are looking forward to their return.

Employers should also reiterate to employees that they're there for them if they need help. By regularly following up with the employee, employers can determine how far along their employees are in their recovery process.

Employers will want to provide updates, if they receive them from the employee, to the claims adjuster. This helps keep the claims adjuster in the loop of the employee's treatment.

### Return-to-Work Assignments

When it comes to return to work, it's important for employers to let their injured employees know if they'll be able to provide light-duty work and to make the necessary accommodations so the employee can return to work as soon as medically possible.

Letting injured employees know that their employers are committed to bringing them back to work can help ease any of their anxiety or uncertainty. When employees return to work, employers should check in daily to make sure

the transition is going smoothly. Employers should also ensure job tasks aren't causing the employee any pain, aggravating injuries or creating new injuries.

### Back to Work Restriction-free

As injured employees return to work and continue to heal, employers can adjust the number of check-ins they have with the employee. Initially, employers should communicate frequently to ensure employees are comfortable and the work isn't creating any further issues. However, as employees settle in, employers can occasionally check in, making sure injured workers are continuing to improve and able to confidently perform their jobs.

It is important to remember that employers often overlook the simplest way to mitigate claim costs—employee communication. Happy employees are ones who feel valued, and communication is essential to gaining their trust and controlling workers' comp costs.

Contact us today to discuss all of your workers' compensation needs.



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