

Bringing your injured worker back to work safely

It's important for all Alberta employers and their workers to work together to have a solid return-to-work plan in place before injuries happen.

It's your responsibility to bring your injured workers back to work:

- as soon as they are able to perform their essential job duties in the same job or a job of equal value and pay, or
- when they are fit for modified work or alternative work in the first available job.

An important part of your plan is ensuring your workers [know their rights and responsibilities](#) if they are injured.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

1. Can your worker return to his or her original job?

- Ask your worker to identify job duties that he/she thinks are suitable.
- Are modifications needed to help your worker perform their job? This can include changes to their work schedule, workload, environment, etc.
- Is specialized equipment needed? Is the equipment needed only for specific tasks?
 - Modifications may only be required for the parts of the job your worker can't do. In most cases, this is only a small part of their overall duties.
- Ask yourself: What accommodations can be made to meet your worker's needs?

Here's a list of accommodation strategies to consider:

- Allowing time off for recuperation as well as supporting leaves of absence for treatment and recovery.
- Making sure that your company's employee assistance program services and other wellness benefits are readily available.
- Modifying job duties, temporarily or permanently, while preserving core functions of a position.
- Offering flexible work schedules or modified hours of work, temporarily or permanently.

- Supporting rehabilitation, work conditioning and graduated return-to-work programs.
- Reassigning an employee to an available, alternative job that suits functional limitations.
- Temporarily employing an assistant or assigning additional support staff for a worker.
- Re-bundling job duties amongst workers.
- Adjusting or relaxing workplace policies.
- Implementing additional training or delivering training in a different way.
- Providing enhanced job coaching.
- Purchasing or modifying tools, special equipment, safety devices or technical aids.
- Altering premises to make them more accessible.
- Supplying specialized computer equipment, monitors, software or communication devices.
- Providing increased space between and within work areas.
- Modify vehicles and mobile equipment with mirrors, rear-view cameras, hand controls and other assistive devices for an operator.

Be creative—focus on what jobs or tasks your worker can do!

2. What kind of ergonomic resources are available to help your injured worker?

Think of ergonomic modifications as designing a workspace that fits the user. It takes into account your worker's capabilities as well as limitations.

Some examples of ergonomic solutions include:

- **Bending, lifting and crouching tools** (e.g., adjustable tables and carts, handy straps and manual, electric and battery office lifts, etc.)
- **Hand, arm and gripping tools** (e.g., one-handed keyboards, telescopic tools to assist with reaching, headsets, standing foot rests, etc.)
- **Driving, trucking and fleet tools** (automatic tire chains, Deck Mate ladder, adjustable ergo truck seats, spinner knobs, etc.)

WCB's return-to-work (RTW) specialists can liaise with and even help coordinate evaluation of your worksite from a certified ergonomist.

They can also visit your worksite to support creative solutions to help you identify possible options for your injured worker's safe return to work.

3. What other jobs are available?

- Identify modified work opportunities in your company before an injury happens. This way you're better prepared to help your injured worker get back to work safely.
- Know your worker's medical abilities and limitations so you can look for new opportunities within your organization.
- Also review your worker's qualifications and skills to see if they fit into vacancies, availabilities in other locations/ departments, or long-term leaves for temporary accommodation while he/she continues to recover.

4. Look for training opportunities.

- Consider cross training or job shadowing.
- A permanent accommodation may be a longer-term training plan (e.g., coursework).

Undue hardship

If the strategies above don't work, we can help you understand if this is creating an undue hardship. Undue hardship is more than just an inconvenience—the threshold is high. We will work with you to determine if undue hardship applies.

To claim undue hardship, you will be required to complete a form that will ask for details and supporting documentation to confirm which factors your claim of undue hardship is based upon.

These factors can include the size of your business, health and safety concerns and cost, to name a few. WCB staff can help guide you through this process.

We can also work with you to develop a return-to-work plan. A great place to look for more information is our [website](#). Here you'll find:

- **Seminars and workshops**—We offer [seminars and workshops](#) in both Edmonton and Calgary that teach you how to build an effective modified work plan.
- **More information on how to formalize your modified work plan**—Check out the [Return to Work section](#) of our website for more detailed information on how you can get a plan in place.
- **Details on our training-on-the-job (TOJ) program**—[The TOJ program](#) provides employers with financial incentive for employee training.

You can also contact us toll-free at 1-866-922-9221 and we'll help you get started.

