

Workers' Compensation Agency Rights & Responsibilities

Michigan's workers' compensation system provides wage replacement, medical treatment, and vocational rehabilitation benefits to individuals who are injured while at work. Each party in this system has rights and responsibilities that ensure the successful operation of the process.

EMPLOYEES

- Most workers are covered under workers' compensation from the date of employment.
- **Report all injuries to your supervisor immediately.**
- When injured, you can receive wage loss benefits, medical care, and rehabilitation services.
- A compensable injury is one that has arisen "out of and in the course of employment." The work must cause the disability.
- Workers' compensation is the "exclusive remedy" for work injuries, meaning that in most cases you cannot sue for other damages.
- **There is a 7-day waiting period for benefit payments.** You will not receive a workers' compensation check for disability lasting less than 7 days. However, medical benefits should be provided from the day of injury. If your wage loss lasts longer than 7 consecutive days, you are entitled to benefits as of the 8th day. If your wage loss continues for 14 days or longer, you are entitled to receive payment for that first week of disability.
- In most cases, wage loss benefits are calculated by taking the average of the highest 39 weeks of the last 52 weeks of gross wages prior to injury. This is your Average Weekly Wage (AWW). Generally you should receive 80% of the after-tax value of your AWW.
- In certain circumstances, the value of discontinued "fringe benefits" such as the cost of health insurance, employer contributions to a pension plan, and vacation and holiday pay may be included in determining the AWW.
- You should be paid your benefit on a weekly basis, and payments should continue as long as you are disabled and are suffering a wage loss.
- Your first check is due and payable on the 14th day of disability. However, a benefit check is not considered "late" until 30 days after the due date.
- If you have **more than one job** covered under the Act, the earnings from Michigan employers are added together to calculate the AWW.
- You may also be eligible for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) benefits. If you have questions, you should contact the U.S. Department of Labor.
- **Medical Benefits:** You are entitled to all reasonable and necessary medical care including surgical, hospital, and dental services, as well as crutches, hearing apparatus, chiropractic treatment, and nursing care. These services are provided indefinitely as long as there is a need.
- **Choosing A Doctor:** During the first 28 days of treatment, the employer has the right to choose the doctor. After that, you are free to change doctors providing that you notify the employer and insurance company, preferably in writing. You do not need authorization from the insurance company or the employer to be medically treated, as long as the treatment is reasonable and necessary, and your claim is not in dispute.
- **Maintaining Contact:** It is extremely important that you maintain regular contact with your employer throughout the treatment and recovery period so that they are aware of your progress. Provide your employer with updated work status reports and discuss early return to work options.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation:** If you have a work-related injury or illness which prevents you from returning to your job and you are currently receiving workers' compensation benefits, you are entitled to a maximum of 104 weeks of vocational assistance in returning to work. Vocational rehabilitation can help you return to your current job or a new one by identifying interests, skills and abilities, evaluating accommodations, providing job readiness assistance, outlining career objectives, and arranging retraining opportunities. Vocational rehabilitation services create a "win-win" scenario for employers, carriers, and injured employees, especially when utilized as an early intervention tool.

EMPLOYERS

- All public and most private employers in Michigan are covered by workers' compensation. Every employer subject to the Act must provide proof of insurance or be approved for self-insurance to ensure benefits can be paid to its workers should they become injured.
- Eligible employees are covered under workers' compensation from the date of employment.
- There are severe penalties if an employer fails to provide workers' compensation coverage.
- **Minors:** The Act provides that an illegally employed minor is entitled to double compensation if injured.
- **Reporting:**
 - ⇒ All claims must be reported to your insurance carrier.
 - ⇒ Form WC-100: must be filed with the Workers' Compensation Agency and your insurance carrier immediately upon the disability exceeding 7 consecutive days, death or specific loss. A copy of this form must also be given to the employee.
- You must ensure that reasonable and necessary medical treatment is provided promptly.
- You will need to provide a wage history report to the insurance carrier in order to calculate the correct benefit amount.
- You are encouraged to maintain contact with your employees while they are off work, and provide appropriate light-duty work options and accommodations when possible.

INSURANCE COMPANIES

- Prompt and regular payment of benefits is required by law.
 - ⇒ Form WC-701: must be filed with the Workers' Compensation Agency (WCA) when wage loss benefits begin, change or stop.
 - ⇒ Form WC-110: must be filed with the WCA 3 months post-injury, and every 4 months after, to report on vocational rehabilitation activity.
- ⇒ Form WC-107: must be filed with the WCA if a claim is disputed.
- Medical services rendered are subject to the State of Michigan Health Care Rules and Fee Schedules. Injured employees are not to be "balance billed" for charges over and above the fee schedule.
- Benefits are not to be stopped for non-cooperation with vocational rehabilitation, but a hearing can be requested.

For more information contact: State of Michigan - Workers' Compensation Agency
 Toll free: 1-888-396-5041 www.michigan.gov/wca