

WCB **Update**

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Keeping you in the clear starts here ... three new Clearance Systems

The sooner you can hire a business, contractor or subcontractor to work on a project, the sooner you can start. But if you hire someone without taking time to check their status with the WCB, it could cost you more money and time.

That's because if you subcontract a business that isn't registered and in good standing with the WCB, you could be responsible for paying the assessment on the workers earnings as though they were your own employees. And if they have an accident on the job, you could be paying for it... with higher WCB assessment rates.

To protect your workers, yourself and your bottom line, you need to obtain a clearance on the business, contractor or sub-contractor you are considering hiring.



The Employer Services division of the Workers Compensation Board has made improving the clearance service a high priority.

"We want to speed up the process

and make clearances easier to obtain," explains Jan Scott, Acting Director of Employer Services.

"After considerable consultation with key customers, we implemented new and better processes for obtaining clearances," she said. "By addressing our customer's needs, we now have a service that is efficient, accurate and easy to use."

The WCB Clearance Request System was created to provide you with fast clearance information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in three new ways:

The Online Directory:

You can search a comprehensive list of businesses by firm number, company or trade style name and immediately see their status with the WCB.

Developing solutions to customer service challenges

WCB creates new position to enhance service quality

As the WCB of Manitoba continues to make strides in reducing the risk and impact of workplace injuries and illnesses, one constant continues to drive the organization – customer service. However, as the expectations of the stakeholders rise, so does the need for enhanced services. The WCB recognizes this, and has just filled a new position to help meet those expectations.

Alice Sayant, the Director of Customer Service, will play a fundamental role in the board's strategy to enhance its provision of customer-centered service delivery.

Alice will help coordinate the many different service-oriented initiatives at the board. Or, as she puts it, "kick-start" our service delivery to the next level.

"There are a lot of customer-focused initiatives at the WCB, and I want to ensure that they build on each other," says Alice, who brings years experience in quality management to the board, along with years of insurance experience at Great West Life.

"Right now, I'm looking at where we need to improve – studying surveys and historical performances, and talking to our people at the front lines."

Alice adds that she will review areas of change, innovation, and improvement to ensure the programs are customer focused.

"We want to meet our clients' expectations quickly and efficiently," she says.

Alice adds that since the Director of Customer Service is a new position, it is likely to evolve as the needs of employers and workers change.

"Our surveys tell us that we're doing a good job at customer service now, but we know that we can move the bar of service quality up higher," Alice says.

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Interactive Online List:

Using a secure Internet connection, registered users can create customized, interactive lists of firms and sub-contractors. If a company's status changes, the Clearance Request System will automatically flag the company's name in your file and email you regarding the change in status the next business day.

Automated Phone and Fax Back Service: Use your phone to get clearance information on a single company or firm by dialing 954-4988 (in Winnipeg) or 1-800-362-3340 (toll free outside Winnipeg). Enter the 7 digit firm number for the business you want clearance information on.

You'll also be given the option of entering a fax number to receive confirmation.

Customers who are already using the system appreciate that their input was solicited regarding a service that is critical to their business operations.

"Our staff have already used the new system countless times," explains Gerhard Hoppenheit, Project Delivery Manager for Brookfield LePage Johnson Controls.

"We find the system easy to use and very prompt on delivery. Listening to customers like us is what allowed the WCB to successfully launch the Clearance Hotline and website."

"We find the system easy to use and very prompt on delivery" - Gerhard Hoppenheit, Project Delivery Manager, Brookfield LePage Johnson Controls

For more information about clearances, who needs them and why, and how to obtain them, visit our web site at www.wcb.mb.ca and select clearances from the menu bar on the left hand side of the screen.

Safety pays dividends for Manitoba companies

WCB Rate Setting Model rewards safe employers

More and more Manitoba firms are reaping the rewards of safer workplaces, thanks in part to the WCB's rate setting model which encourages accident prevention.

This experience-based model rewards employers who reduce accidents and have effective disability management programs. In 2002, safety paid off for 83 per cent of employers who saw their WCB assessment rates go down.

70 per cent of Manitoba employers are covered by the Workers Compensation Board, and are no doubt aware that accident history determines WCB assessment rates under the new rate setting model that was introduced in 2001.

For many employers the connection between protecting workers and reducing costs has already been made, and the benefits of workplace safety programs are being realized.

Standard Aero is an excellent example of a company where safety has paid dividends.

In just over a decade, Standard Aero has seen their WCB assessment rates drop from \$1.46 in premiums for every \$100.00 of assessable payroll in 1990 to \$.20 in 2002. The direct cost savings over the last 10 years in WCB premiums alone were over \$6 million. This savings amount is compounded considerably when you add the cost of retraining staff, production delays, or

damage to equipment.

"We're committed to providing an environment where safety and health are paramount to everything we do," said Paul Soubry Jr., President of Standard Aero Canada. *"Every cell is designed with productivity, efficiency, and safety in mind."*

Another vehicle used by the WCB to reduce workplace injury and disease is the Community Initiatives and Research Program.

"We're committed to providing an environment where safety and health are paramount to everything we do." - Paul Soubry Jr., President of Standard Aero Canada.

The CIRP provides up to \$1 million annually to fund projects on accident and disease prevention, safety in the workplace, treatment of workplace injuries, support for injured workers and their families, and research into scientific, medical or other issues related to workers compensation.

The protection of Manitoba's young workers should get special consideration when an employer designs a workplace safety program. This group is disproportionately represented in workplace accidents.

Between 1990 and 2001 inclusive,

the WCB recorded 20 fatalities for young workers (under age 25). In that same time period, (1990 to 2001), more than 3,000 young workers missed time away from work each year, due to a workplace injury.

The Manitoba Federation of Labour & Winnipeg Boys and Girls Club, through funding by the WCB Community Initiatives and Research Program, operate the "Workers of Tomorrow Health & Safety Campaign."

This is a valuable resource that employers can turn to for advice on how to deal with the unique safety considerations of Manitoba's young workforce—especially at this time of year with so many students working summer jobs in a variety of professional and labour fields. Workers of Tomorrow can be contacted at: 1-800-282-8069, or visit their web site at www.workersoftomorrow.com

A positive safety record can save a company money by reducing WCB assessment rates, and eliminating costs resulting from the need to retrain an employee or delays in production—tangible economic benefits for any employer.

The social benefits of Manitoba workers and their families knowing that they will come home from work safe everyday are immeasurable.

Bill 5: The link between disease and fire fighting

Bill 5, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act, came into force on May 23, 2002. The Bill recognizes the link between exposure to hazards faced by full-time firefighters and certain diseases. Manitoba is the first province in Canada to officially recognize this link. The Bill applies retroactively to accidents on or after January 1, 1992.

Bill 5 amends the WCA to include a rebuttable presumption that if a full-time firefighter employed for a minimum period gets a certain type of cancer, the dominant cause of the cancer is the employment as a firefighter. A regulation will set out the minimum employment periods, which range from five years for leukemia to 20 years for kidney cancer and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

In 2001, the WCB commissioned a review of recent scientific literature dealing with health hazards faced by full-time firefighters. The review confirmed the association between professional urban firefighting and primary cancer of the brain, bladder, kidney, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and leukemia.

Manitoba has about 1,000 full-time firefighters, and 500 retired firefighters. It is expected that we will see approximately two or three cases related to Bill 5 each year.

The Bill also requires the WCB to conduct research to determine whether the five cancers are occupational diseases of part-time firefighters and to report back to the Legislature within three years.

WCB Premium Rate Increase

Q & A

In December 2001, the WCB advised Manitoba employers that there would be a 4.7% mid year general rate increase.

Here are some of the most asked questions employers like you have had about the mid year rate increase.

Why did the WCB implement the increase in the middle of the year?

The rate increase was implemented in the middle of the year (July 1) to allow you time to budget accordingly. As well, we intended to minimize the economic impact on your business by introducing the rate increase at the mid-way point of the year, instead of at the beginning.

Why did the WCB need a rate increase in 2002?

In 2001 the WCB's finances were based 73% on employer assessments and 27% on investment income. At the end of 2001, a down turn in the capital markets, heightened by the events of September 11, led to decreased investment revenues in 2001.

Therefore the WCB increased the

average assessment rate to meet its financial commitments.

When will I see the rate increase?

Rate change adjustments will be processed in late September or early October, and your Account Statement will be sent to you shortly after they are processed. Employers should receive their Account Statement, confirming that the rate increase has been applied, by the end of October.

How will the 4.7% increase affect my 2003 assessment rate?

Your 2003 rate will be based on what you were assessed from July 1 to the end of the year. Firms were notified of their 2002 rate for July to December in the December 17, 2001 letter from Employer Services.

How does Manitoba's average rate compare to other WCB's?

The average rate, between January 1, and June 30, 2002 was \$1.49. When increased by 4.7% effective July 1, 2002, the new 2002 average rate becomes \$1.56. Even with the increase, Manitoba employers have the lowest average rates of any other provincial WCB.

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