



## Assessment Tool Pays Dividends for Newfoundland and Labrador Employers

Newfoundland  
Labrador



Employers in Newfoundland and Labrador are seeing the benefits of undergoing a Workplace Disability Management Assessment (WDMA) through their provincial workers' compensation commission.

Danny Joyce is the Return to Work Program Coordinator for the Workplace Health Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC) who is both a Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) and Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC), and is licensed to perform the WDMA throughout the province.

Under its PRIME program, the WHSCC offers discounts for employers through the practice incentive program. "In order to receive a refund under the program, as a large employer, you have to have a RTW program and an occupational health and safety program in place."

One of the requirements is to conduct an evaluation of your RTW program every year. The WHSCC offers the WDMA to specific employers in the province, and if the employer agrees to participate in that assessment, they fulfill their requirement to evaluate their return to work program. Over the past three years, WHSCC has budgeted for up to 15 WDMA's annually.

Joyce said that while the long-term goal is to lower costs for employers through better return to work / disability management practices, the WHSCC stresses the educational aspects of the process.

"We put the focus on the return to work / disability management side of it. When people look at occupational health and safety, the first thing they think of is prevention. A portion of the WDMA deals with prevention, but mostly it looks at how you deal with it after the fact.

"We all know safety is the most important thing, but in the absence of not being able to prevent an injury, how you deal with that claim after the fact is very, very important, because it minimizes the impact on the worker and the employer."

In part, the WDMA process sends a message that, rather than just focusing on workers' compensation claims, employers should have a solid program in place to deal consistently with both occupational and non-occupational injury and illness.

This additional benefit was a big eye-opener for City Tire and Auto Centre, according to Robert Nash, Director of Administration and Information Technology.



“We realized that we were treating them as two distinct groups: one workers’ compensation group and one non-workers’ compensation, and we were more focused on the workers’ compensation group.”

The company operates nine retail locations plus a tire retreading operation and a wholesale distribution centre. The findings of the WDMA, which was performed in June 2012, have now been disseminated throughout the company, down to the store level.

“The WDMA allowed us to continue to build upon the work that we were doing and hopefully lead to better results in the future. It increased the awareness of the gaps in the system.”

Nash said the company has also been able to compare its performance and practices against other employers at the provincial, national and international level.

The NIDMAR approach is consensus-based. With the PRIME program, WHSCC has adopted a requirement for joint and meaningful consultation between all parties.

“In other words, in order for you to receive a refund, you have to provide people outside of management with the opportunity to give you advice and feedback on your program.”

If the employer does receive the refund, they will be further required to provide documented proof of “joint and meaningful consultation,” he added.

Molson Coors Canada underwent a WDMA in April 2010 at their St. John’s brewing operation. Human Resources Manager Karen Brake reported that the immediate benefit of the WDMA was to confirm that Molson Coors was on the right track in improving their disability management practices. Further downstream, the consensus-based process has paid further dividends.

Molson Coors used the WDMA to meet the evaluation requirement for the PRIME program in Newfoundland that year, and from their perspective, it enhanced their relationship with WHSCC and the union.

By participating in the WDMA, Molson Coors said they were better served. The WDMA has led to increased employee awareness of the return to work program and the value of the program itself. As part of that growing awareness, the company is now taking advantage of the disability management and occupational health and safety education and training programs that the WHSCC offers.