

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Spring 2001

Information for Preferred Workers who haven't yet used their return-to-work incentives

Preferred Worker job orders on the Employment Department Web site *by Craig Sorseth*

A resource is available from the Oregon Employment Department for Preferred Workers. On the Employment Department Web site, Preferred Workers can search statewide for employers who have indicated to the Employment Department that they are willing to hire Preferred Workers.

The process is simple. Access the Employment Department Web site at: www.emp.state.or.us, click on "Jobs" in the upper left corner of the page, click on "Oregon Jobs," then on the "Search for keyword in job descriptions" option. Enter "Preferred Worker" and click on "Submit." You will see a list of

statewide jobs, all of which have the words "Preferred Workers" in the job description. You can click on any of the jobs to get more specific details, such as required experience.

To follow up on any of these jobs, get the referral number shown on the posting and present it to an Employment Department representative, who can review your qualifications and possibly refer you to the employer. The list changes frequently as new jobs are added and old ones are removed.

Don't forget you can look at all jobs listed statewide with the Employment Department through its Web site. Some of the jobs are "self-referred," meaning you can contact the employer directly. These job listings are accompanied by an asterisk (*). Employment Department representatives will be happy to help you. Happy hunting! ■

Success story *by Bruce Friedrichsen*

Archie, a 33-year-old man, injured his low back while working as a glazier. His injury left him with permanent work restrictions that precluded his return to regular work.

Archie is restricted to maximum occasional lifting of 50 pounds and frequent lifting of 21 - 30 pounds. He cannot do any repetitive forward bending. Archie cannot sit, stand, or walk more than 30 minutes each and can do these activities for no more than four hours in an eight-hour workday.

Archie was hired as a freight coordinator with a transportation brokerage firm. His primary work duties require him to sit at a desk to answer or make phone calls, perform data entry or retrieval, and arrange freight transfers. He is free to change positions as needed; however, there are times when he may sit more than 30 minutes at one time and he often exceeds four hours of sitting during a workday.

Archie is a tall man. He worked at a standard non-adjustable desk

with two surface levels and sat in a standard office chair. He had to slump in his chair to do keyboarding. He frequently had to bend and twist at the waist to read from documents on a separate, lower surface.

The Reemployment Assistance Unit consultant determined that an electric height-adjustable workstation and an ergonomic chair would allow Archie to work within his permanent-injury-caused work restrictions. A vendor built a custom workstation that has a book holder attached to the edge of the desk. These worksite modifications allow Archie to perform his duties sitting or standing. While sitting, he is supported by the ergonomic chair, which was chosen for and fitted to his large frame. The worksurface raises with the push of a button to allow Archie to work while standing.

Archie expressed his gratitude for the Preferred Worker Program's assistance. He is amazed how much difference the chair and custom workstation make in his workday. ■

PWP Training Calendar

OR-OSHA offers no-cost occupational safety and health training throughout Oregon. Training includes Preferred Worker Program seminars. The winter schedule for PWP seminars is as follows:

March 15 Ashland

March 20 Portland

March 22 Bend

April 5 Hermiston

April 19 Beaverton

All seminars are at 1 p.m.

For further information or to find out **how to register**, see "Training & events" on our Web site: www.oregonwcd.org, or call (503) 947-7443 or (888) 292-5247 option 2 (message). Registrations are not taken over the phone. ■

Meet Ursulla Bischoff



Ursulla Bischoff is the technical and support services manager for the Reemployment Assistance Unit. She is responsible for overseeing the duties

of four support staff and six re-employment specialists who provide services for the Preferred Worker Program. The re-employment specialists are responsible for answering questions, determining Preferred Worker eligibility, and helping Preferred Workers and their employers get program benefits.

Ursulla earned a bachelor's degree in communication arts with a minor in business from George Fox University in 1990. In August of 1990, she began her state career with the Evaluation Unit of the Workers' Compensation Division. However, Ursulla's long-term goal was to work for the Preferred Worker Program. After three years with the Evaluation Unit, Ursulla was promoted to re-employment

specialist, a job at which she spent the next three years. During her third year, she was the lead re-employment specialist. She then decided to pursue additional leadership roles and was promoted into the Operations Section of WCD as the Claims/Coverage Unit manager. After three years, her chance came to move back into the Preferred Worker Program as the technical and support services manager. This was an extremely exciting promotion for Ursulla and was right in line with the career path she wanted to follow.

Ursulla enjoys working for Oregon's Preferred Worker Program and appreciates the positive effects the program has for injured workers and their employers. "It is rewarding to see how excited workers and employers are when we can provide them with wage subsidy, clothing, tools and equipment necessary to get back to work." She truly believes there is no better place to work within state government.

Ursulla's email address is ursulla.j.bischoff@state.or.us. ■

Lost cards

Call if you can't find your Preferred Worker card: Salem office, (800) 445-3948 (from Oregon only), (503) 947-7588, or (503) 947-7993 (TTY). Medford office (for Southern Oregon), (800) 696-7161. We'll send you a replacement. ■

Administrator, Workers' Compensation Division

John Shilts

Reemployment assistance

Salem office (800) 445-3948

Medford office (800) 696-7161

Web site address www.oregonwcd.org

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Job search tips: get organized and be prepared *by Barbara Smith*

Avoid missing job opportunities because you can't pull an application together before the due date. Collect all the information you need for a job search before you're facing a deadline and keep it in one safe place.

- Protect the information with a file folder or large envelope.
- Have one sheet on which you list your work history with start and end dates for each job by month and year.
- Have names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your references typed on a sheet. Make extra copies.

Keep your references up-to-date.

- Choose them with care.
- Make sure they agree to be used as references. Talk with them about what you'd like them to say if asked about your injury.
- Call them from time to time, so they know you're job hunting.

Make extra copies of items that would be hard to replace, and keep them in a safe place different from the one in which you're storing your file folder.

- Your letters of reference
- Proof you can legally work in the United States
- Special licenses and certificates

Plan what you want to say about your Preferred Worker benefits.

- You choose when — and if — you'll talk about your status. You needn't mention your injury at all, unless you can't do an essential part of the job because of it.
- Read up on the program. Know its features and how they work. Call us if you have any questions. An employer's decision to hire you and use the program may depend partly on how you describe the program. If you can describe the program in simple terms, the employer will respond

more positively. If the employer wants to know more, ask him or her to call us right away.

- Some employers will be negative, even when they have the details — don't let them get you down! Let them know you want the job and will be an asset to the company.
- ### **Keep track of the contacts you've made and the interviews you've had.**
- Record the date of the interview, the company name, the company address, and the interviewer's name and phone number.
 - Use this information for follow-up contacts. Record those contacts, too. What information did you receive? What further action should you take?

The community college in your area or your local Oregon Employment Department office may offer free job-search classes.

Questions and answers *by David Onheiber*

Q A Genie Lift was assigned to me as part of my work-site modification. What happens if it is damaged while I'm on the job?

A A work-site modification item becomes the property and responsibility of the person to whom it is assigned. You are responsible for maintaining the Genie Lift and for paying for repairs.

Q When I'm talking with an employer about a job offer, should I ask for more money, as I'm offering a wage subsidy?

A You and the employer may negotiate a wage. However, it is recommended that your starting wage be close to the range for starting wages paid workers who have similar skills and experience in your area and labor market. Many employers are reluctant or unable to continue an unreasonable

high wage — or even the job — once the wage subsidy ends. Preferred Worker Program staff review wage subsidy agreements to be sure the wages are in line with the wage range for the job and the labor market. A wage subsidy with inflated wages is not likely to be approved.

Q I just received a Preferred Worker Identification Card but will not be able to use it for quite a while because I am participating in a training plan offered by my insurer. Does this mean I will not have three years to use the card after I finish training?

A Your Preferred Worker Identification Card expires three years from the date it is issued. However, should you use the card for a job before your training ends and before the card expires, you will receive a second card, a Preferred Worker Eligibility Card,

that is good for an additional three years. If you do not use the identification card before your training ends, you will receive another Preferred Worker Identification Card with a new three year time period that will replace your current card when your claim is closed after your training ends.

Q I was just hired on a new job. If my old injury claim reopens while I'm working at this job, will my new employer have to pay for the claim?

A No. A claim reopening (aggravation) remains the responsibility of your old employer. If you have a new injury, and premium exemption has been approved for your job, your new employer will not have to pay for the claim and your employer's workers' compensation premium will not be affected by the claim. ■

Patient lifts

Worker disability:

A 44-year-old certified nurse's aide injured his low back in a lifting incident. His permanent restrictions as a result of his injury include a lifting limit of 30 pounds occasionally and preclude repetitive bending, stooping, and twisting.

Work setting:

The worker returned to a modified version of his regular work. He was sometimes required to lift patients from a sitting to a standing position or from a sitting or lying position to transfer them to toilet, wheelchair, or chair.

Obstacle:

The worker's lifting restrictions precluded manual patient transfers and lifts.

Modification:

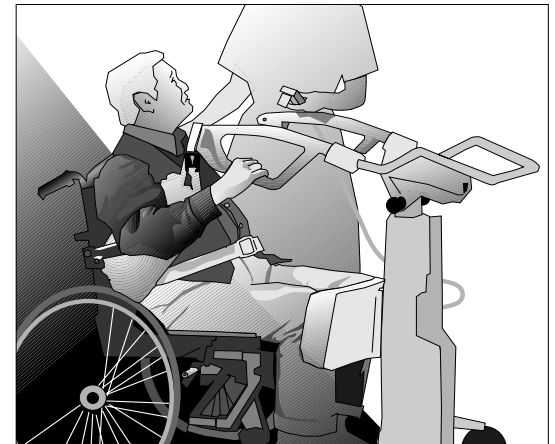
Two types of patient lifts allow the worker to meet the lifting/transferring requirements of his job.

An electric general-purpose lift moves patients from a seated or lying position (even on the floor) and transfers them to a bed, into a wheelchair, onto a toilet, or even into an automobile.

The second type of electric lift, a standing lift, helps the patient from a seated position to a standing position without requiring the worker to exceed his lifting limitations.

Cost of modification:

Cost of general purpose lift is about \$4,300, including shipping.
Cost of standing lift is about \$4,200, including shipping.



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