

# PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Spring 2005

## What do all those initials mean? \_\_\_\_\_

by Kerry King

You may think we're speaking a foreign language when we use the following terms. We try to remember to speak plain English, but sometimes we use shortcuts when talking to Preferred Workers.

**DCBS — Department of Consumer & Business Services:** The state agency that contains the Workers' Compensation Division.

**WCD — Workers' Compensation Division:** The state-agency division that regulates the workers' compensation system in Oregon and administers the Preferred Worker Program.

**AFP: Authorization for payment:** One of the methods used to pay for worksite modification and OEP items. This voucher authorizes the purchase of a *specific* item or items. RAU sends the AFP to you (or the employer), you sign it and give it to the store where you are making the purchases. Store personnel sign it and send it to DCBS with the invoice. DCBS pays the store directly.

**OEP — Obtained employment purchase:** Benefit provided directly to workers to help with costs of starting or keeping a job. For example, tools and special clothing. For the item to qualify as an OEP, it must be required by the employer for all workers doing a particular job (the one you're hired to do), and it must be something the employer does not purchase for employees. In addition, it must be something you don't already own.

**PE — Premium exemption:** An employer exemption from having to pay insurance premiums for workers' compensation coverage.

**WSM — Worksite modification:** This usually means equipment purchased and installed at your worksite so that you may work safely within the permanent restrictions caused by your on-the-job injury. Worksite modifications are also possible through the re-assignment of job duties, or a change in the length of time required to perform a certain task, or a combination of equipment and job-duty changes.

**PWP — Preferred Worker Program,** which was begun in 1990; it's paid for by the Workers' Benefit Fund, which, in turn, is paid by every Oregon subject worker and employee on a "cents-per-hour" basis.

**RAU — Reemployment Assistance Unit:** This is the unit within WCD that delivers Preferred Worker Program benefits. In this newsletter, when we talk about what "we" do, "we" usually means RAU. ■

## In this Issue

What do all those initials mean?...1
Register for our new e-mail service.....1
New direct link .....1
Important time frames within the Preferred Worker Program .....2
Worksite Modification — Inventory/Office.....3
Success story.....4

## Register for our new e-mail service

If you are looking for employment, we have a new system that allows you to register by location to receive job postings. When an employer posts a job on the Preferred Worker Program Job Match site in the geographical location for which you are registered, an e-mail will be sent to you with a link to the job posting. For more information, call (800) 445-3948 or (503) 947-7588.



## New direct link

To get to the online Preferred Worker Program or the Job Match site more quickly, use our new direct link, [www.oregonpwp.info](http://www.oregonpwp.info).

# Important time frames within the Preferred Worker Program

by Kerry King

To make sure you are getting the most from your Preferred Worker benefits, there are some important time frames to remember.

## **Preferred Worker identification card**

A Preferred Worker identification card is valid for three years from the date it is issued. This three-year period appears on the front of your card. Anytime during this period, you can activate **premium exemption**; after the three-year period, you'll be ineligible for the program. This three-year eligibility period cannot be interrupted or extended. To use premium exemption, you and your employer must complete the form on the back of the identification card and return it to the Workers' Compensation Division within 90 days of your start-work date. Once premium exemption is approved, WCD will send you a Preferred Worker eligibility card.

## **Preferred Worker eligibility card**

The Preferred Worker eligibility card also is valid for three years and cannot be interrupted or extended. This card will have the start and end dates of your premium-exemption

period on the front. If you change employers during the premium-exemption period, have your new employer follow the instructions on the back of this card. Another name for your premium-exemption period is "eligibility period." You are eligible to use premium exemption with any number of eligible Oregon employers within that three-year period.

## **Wage subsidy agreement**

You and your employer must complete, sign, and send the wage-subsidy agreement to the Preferred Worker Program within 90 days of your start-work date. (You may fax the agreement and identification card.) Upon program approval, a wage subsidy provides a 50 percent reimbursement of your gross wages to your employer for your first 183 calendar days of work (about six months.) If you do not have the wage-subsidy-agreement form, you can download it from our Web site at [www.oregonpwp.info](http://www.oregonpwp.info), or call us, (800) 445-3948, and we'll mail or fax the form to you.

## **Worksite modification**

You can request worksite modification immediately when you start a job with a new employer or your

employer at injury. Sometimes workers find that, although their jobs are within their restrictions when they start, added duties cause them to request worksite modification. When you start an Oregon job during your eligibility period, you have three years from your start-work date to request worksite modification. Even if you start a job on the last day of your eligibility, you have three years from that date within which to contact the Preferred Worker Program and request worksite modification. To find out if you qualify for this assistance, please call us at (800) 445-3948.

**Save this article** and review this information after you get a job. If you have questions about time frames or other aspects of the program, call the Preferred Worker Program, (800) 445-3948, for clarification. Remember, there are no "dumb questions!" ■

**Administrator**, Workers' Compensation Division  
John Shilts

### **Re-employment assistance**

Salem office ..... (800) 445-3948  
Medford office ..... (800) 696-7161  
Web site ..... [www.oregonpwp.info](http://www.oregonpwp.info)

### **Contributors**

Ana Contreras ..... [ana.contreras@state.or.us](mailto:ana.contreras@state.or.us)  
Dan Gammon ..... [dan.r.gammon@state.or.us](mailto:dan.r.gammon@state.or.us)  
Christy Johnson ..... [christy.l.johnson@state.or.us](mailto:christy.l.johnson@state.or.us)  
Kerry King ..... [kerry.f.king@state.or.us](mailto:kerry.f.king@state.or.us)  
David Onheiber ..... [david.onheiber@state.or.us](mailto:david.onheiber@state.or.us)  
Jerry Rutherford ..... [gerald.v.rutherford@state.or.us](mailto:gerald.v.rutherford@state.or.us)

**Editor**, WCD Communications and Training Section  
Ana Contreras ..... [ana.contreras@state.or.us](mailto:ana.contreras@state.or.us)

**Editing**, Dian Cox, DCBS Communications  
**Design**, Shonnie Emerson, DCBS Communications

*Preferred Worker Adviser* is a publication of the Oregon Workers' Compensation Division.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this publication is available in alternative formats. This publication is in the public domain and may be copied and distributed without permission

The Adviser is printed on recycled paper and is recyclable.



# Worksite Modification — Inventory/Office

By David Onheiber

## **Worker disability**

After the worker hurt her back and her neck, she was unable to do her photo shop supervisory job.

She is permanently restricted from lifting or carrying more than 25 pounds and from pushing or pulling with a force greater than 25 pounds. She can use her hands repetitively at or above her shoulder level for no more than five minutes an hour. She may need to change her posture often. She lost some ability to bend her neck forward and backward and to turn her head from side to side. Her ability to bend her upper back forward is limited.

## **Work setting**

The worker returned to work with her employer at injury as an inventory auditor. She inspects items that are stored from floor level to a height of about 15 feet. She removes merchandise stored on shelves that are 68 inches high. She sits, for up to six hours a day, at a work surface reviewing documents and using her computer.

## **Job obstacles**

When the worker inventories merchandise, she must bend forward to inspect items stored at floor level. She has to bend her neck backward to inventory stock that is placed up to 15 feet high. When the worker sits at her work surface, she must bend her neck forward to read documents. Her chair doesn't adjust so that she can place her feet comfortably on the floor. She sits bent forward for prolonged periods.

## **Modification**

A mobile platform was built to accommodate a camcorder and a monitor. The camcorder is mounted on an articulating monitor holder. The worker is able to inspect items at any level up to 15 feet by adjusting the camera mounted on the articulating arm and watching the monitor, which is placed so that she can maintain neutral head posture. The mobile platform also holds a safety step. The worker can use the step to remove merchandise from shelves, avoiding prolonged repetitive use of her hands at shoulder level or above. She is able to move the compact mobile platform throughout the building without exceeding her push/pull restrictions. An ergonomic chair and a footrest were provided so that the worker can sit with her back and feet supported. The chair, footrest, a recessed keyboard tray, monitor arm holder, and document holder allow her

to work without repetitive or prolonged forward bending of her neck and upper back. The employer eliminated some job duties so that the worker does not exceed her lift, carry, push, or pull restrictions.

## **Cost**

The modification cost \$4,223.88. ■



Inventory cart, user side



Inventory cart, ladder side



DEPARTMENT OF  
CONSUMER  
& BUSINESS  
SERVICES

Workers' Compensation Division  
P.O. Box 14480  
Salem, OR 97309-0405

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
SALEM OR  
PERMIT NO. 81

## Success story

by Christy Johnson

Adrian, a 28-year-old delivery driver, injured his back while working for a Portland beverage company. After recovering from his injury, he got a job as an apprentice electrician. He enrolled at a community college and completed academic courses for his apprenticeship while he continued working. The Preferred Worker Program reimbursed him for tuition, books, and fees after he submitted an *Obtained Employment Purchase Agreement*. Adrian was also reimbursed for tools and clothing required for his job.

Just over a year after starting work as an apprentice for one com-

pany, Adrian went to work with another electrical company and was approved for his second wage subsidy. He also took advantage of more obtained employment purchases and was reimbursed for tuition, books, and fees to continue education required by his apprenticeship. Adrian also used worksite modification, which made it possible for him to continue working more fully in his new occupation within his permanent restrictions.

Adrian has made the most of his abilities and started a new career with the assistance available through the Preferred Worker Program. ■

