

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Winter 2007-2008

Frequently Asked Questions

By Christy Johnson

Q Why did I get a new Preferred Worker identification card?

A Every Preferred Worker eligible for benefits on Dec. 1, 2007, is being sent a replacement card because there is no longer an expiration date on your card. Once you're eligible, you're eligible for life.

Q I have been off work for quite some time. I have recently applied for some jobs and have interviews scheduled for next week. Unfortunately, I cannot afford the gas to get to the interviews. Can the Preferred Worker Program help me with gas money?

A Yes. As of Dec. 1, 2007, the Preferred Worker Program rules have changed. Our new rules now include miscellaneous purchases that include helping the worker find, accept, or

retain employment, but do not include buying a car. Finding employment is limited to purchases necessary to get to an interview in Oregon. This category can be used as often as necessary, up to a maximum of \$2,500.

Please keep in mind all requests do take time to process. It can take up to seven working days to get a check from the Preferred Worker Program, once the request has been approved.

Q I have an employer who would like to hire me but does not have the money to purchase a desk, computer, chair, and other items necessary for me to do the job. Can the program purchase these items for me, even though the purchases do not qualify under the worksite modification category?

A Yes. As stated earlier, our rules have changed effective Dec. 1, 2007. Our new rules add a category called worksite creation, which includes equipment, furnishings, or other things the employer needs to create a new job for the worker. All items purchased are the property of the employer. Maximum expenditure per use is \$5,000. ■

In this Issue

Frequently asked questions	1
The Preferred Worker Program (PWP) has benefits for you	1
Rebar automatic tying tool	2
A few tips on job-hunting using the Preferred Worker Program	3
Meet Lacey Noeske	4

The Preferred Worker Program (PWP) has benefits for you

- ◆ Are you using the PWP benefits to offer incentives to an employer to hire you?
- ◆ Are you using the PWP benefits to modify a job to allow you to work within the limitations caused by your on-the-job injury?
- ◆ Are you using PWP benefits to purchase employment items such as tools and clothes?
- ◆ Did you know the PWP benefits are easy to access?

JUST CALL AND ASK:
(800) 445-3948

El Programa para el Trabajador Preferido (PWP) tiene beneficios para usted!

- ◆ ¿Está usted usando los beneficios que el PWP ofrece para incentivar a que un empleador le dé trabajo?
- ◆ ¿Está usted usando los beneficios del PWP para modificar su trabajo y así poder trabajar dentro de las limitaciones causadas por su lesión en el trabajo?
- ◆ ¿Está usted usando los beneficios del PWP para adquirir lo necesario para el trabajo como herramientas o ropa?
- ◆ ¿Sabía usted que es muy fácil usar los beneficios del programa?

SOLO LLAME Y PREGUNTENOS AL:
(800) 445-3948 ext. 7584

Программа преимущественных прав (PWP) имеет льготы для вас!

- ◆ Используете ли вы льготы программы преимущественных прав (PWP) для побуждения работодателя принять вас на работу?
- ◆ Используете ли вы льготы программы (PWP) для модификации рабочего места, чтобы облегчить ограничения, имеющиеся после травмы, полученной на производстве?
- ◆ Используете ли вы льготы программы (PWP) для покупки рабочих предметов, таких как инструменты и одежда?
- ◆ Знали ли вы, что льготы программы (PWP) могут быть легко достижимы?

Вы можете узнать больше позвонив по телефону: (800) 445-3948 ext. 7639

Rebar automatic tying tool

by Bruce Friedrichsen

Worker disability

A 54-year-old concrete construction laborer sustained a severe low back injury. This resulted in permanent work restrictions, one of which was no prolonged bending at the waist.

Work setting

The worker must tie rebar for ground-level concrete reinforcement on virtually every job site (e.g., sidewalks, patio slabs, etc.).

Typically the worker performs this task with pliers in one hand, the wire tie in the other hand, and constantly bending at the waist to tie the wire around the rebar at multiple places until the job is complete. Depending on the size of the job, it could be an all-day project.

Obstacle

Prolonged, repetitive bending at the waist to perform rebar tying by hand.



Modification

A cordless rebar-tying tool with an extended handle allowed the worker to perform the task with minimal bending at the waist. The tool significantly reduced the total time required to complete the job task.

Cost of modification

The automatic rebar-tying tool cost \$1,800, which included a carrying case. A case of wire spools and an extra rechargeable battery cost \$500. ■



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

Administrator

John Shilts

Reemployment assistance

Salem office (800) 445-3948

Medford office (800) 696-7161

Web site..... www.oregonpwp.info

Contributor

Bob Williams robert.t.williams@state.or.us

Matt West matt.west@state.or.us

Stephaine Snyder stephanie.j.snyder@state.or.us

Vera Grishina vera.b.grishina@state.or.us

Bruce Friedrichsen bruce.c.friedrichsen@state.or.us

Christy Johnson christy.l.johnson@state.or.us

Editor

Ana Contreras ana.contreras@state.or.us

Editing, Lisa Morawski *DCBS Communications*

Layout, Stacey Thias *DCBS Communications*

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.



A few tips on job-hunting using the Preferred Worker Program

By Bob Williams

The Preferred Worker Program (PWP) gives you the best possible incentives to get the interest from potential employers, but you must still be your own salesperson. The PWP, for the most part, does not have direct job placement services that will find you job openings, get you the appointment with the employer, and then sit with you to explain the program to the employer. The best thing to do is to prepare yourself to be your own best salesperson. Even as a Preferred Worker, you must still find the job openings, submit an application, and explain the value of the PWP to the employer at your interview.

How can you be your own best salesperson?

1. Read all of your PWP materials, forms, and brochures — several times. Know your benefits so that you can explain it to a family member or friend. If they can understand what you are saying, chances are an employer will understand your PWP benefits. Even though the PWP has been available to Oregon employers for more than 17 years, most employers still don't know about the program or the true value of the program benefits. Go to your interviews with the expectation that you will likely be explaining your PWP benefits to an employer who has never heard of the program. During the interview, be concise and organized. Leave the employer with PWP materials, so they can contact us at (800) 445-3948 if they have any questions you can't answer about the program.
2. Take a pencil or a calculator to your interview. Before the interview, practice adding up the bottom-line values of all of your PWP benefits (or the ones you are willing to offer the employer).

Use different wage or salary amounts, and add up the value of six months of your wage subsidy for the employer. Then take the pencil to the interviews, and show the prospective employers the actual dollar values of your benefits. Ask the employer what a year of workers' compensation insurance would cost for your potential job, multiply it by three, and then show the employer the dollar value of your premium exemption benefit. Show the employer the bottom-line value of money available for possible worksite modifications.

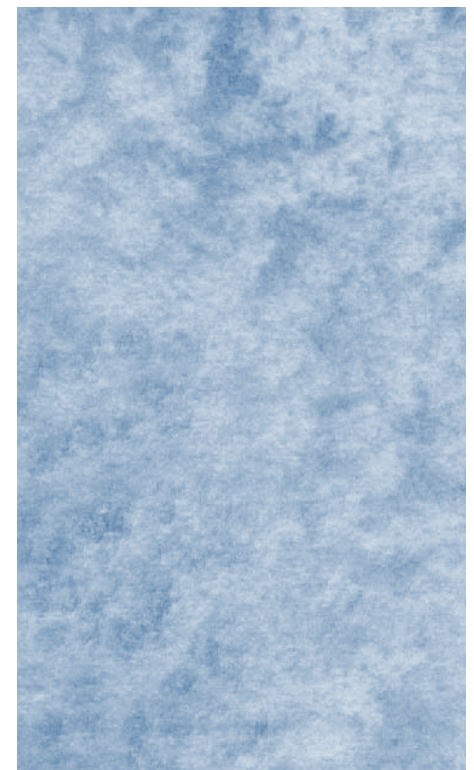
Mention that as a Preferred Worker, you are the only type of employee they can hire that is risk free from workers' compensation claims for three years. If they hire any other worker, that employer is taking a risk on paying on a potential workers' compensation claim for that worker. As a Preferred Worker, your employer is eligible for reimbursement for any injuries you sustain on the job. And your three years of premium exemption gives the employer absolute protection from any costs or insurance rate increases if you have an injury.

3. Remember you can apply for jobs that might be too physically hard for you to perform because you have worksite modification benefits of up to \$25,000. And on Dec. 1, 2007, under the new rules, you will have an additional \$5,000 for job creation. Tell the potential employer about these benefits, which they can use to modify or create a job that fits within your restrictions.

If you don't get the job or if the interview ends when you mention injury or PWP, one or two things likely have occurred.

- A. You may not have explained in clear terms or in enough detail the value of your PWP benefits. If you are a good worker and you offer PWP benefits, there is no way an employer can lose if they hire you.
- B. If you do a good job of selling yourself and the employer has heard and seen the value of your PWP benefits, and they still do not hire you, that employer may not be the type of employer you want to work for. The smartest and best employers will recognize a good deal when they see one; those are the types of employers who will likely take good care of you after they hire you.

You have tremendously valuable PWP benefits that will help make a smart employer more competitive and more profitable. As your own best salesperson, you should know and believe that a good employer will be lucky to hire you. And, you can confidently tell them the reasons why. ■



Meet Lacey Noeske

by *Stephanie Snyder*



Lacey Noeske

on a yearlong rotation as an administrative support specialist. Noeske began her career with the Workers' Compensation Division in January

'Tis the season of change for Lacey Noeske. She is the newest staff member in the Reemployment Assistant Unit, joining in July 2007

2006 as a temporary employee. In July 2006, she was hired full time as a claims coding specialist in the claims unit.

Noeske enjoys her position supporting re-employment specialists and consultants because of the variety of work and the people in the unit. Her long-term goal is to be a field investigator, primarily because of the person-to-person interaction and the mobility involved. Until then, she is keeping busy handling and routing wage subsidy

requests, worksite modifications, eligibility determinations, and obtained employment purchase agreements.

Noeske's work environment isn't the only thing changing in her life. She is engaged to be married in July 2008 and recently purchased a new home with her fiancé, James. Noeske is excited for this new phase in her life and looking forward to moving into a home, just in time for the holidays.

Noeske's e-mail address is lacey.noeske@state.or.us. ■