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WCD**Today**

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## WCDToday

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Department of Consumer and Business Services  
Andrew R. Stolfi, Director

Workers’ Compensation Division  
Matt West, Acting Administrator

<i>WCD Today</i> editor	DCBS editor	Designer
Autumn Blake	Michael Plett	Angela Van Grunsven

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Matt West

## Administrator's Notebook:

# Division updates

By Matt West, interim WCD administrator.

### Happy New Year and welcome back to another edition of WCD Today.

This will be my last issue of WCD Today as interim administrator for the Workers' Compensation Division (WCD). The recruitment and interviews for a new administrator are underway. We expect to hear a decision about the new administrator in the coming weeks. Keep an eye on our social media feed (#OregonWCD on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#)) to be one of the first to find out.

Shawn Haywood has kindly supported WCD through the last year of its leadership transition. During this time, he has been a strong leader while holding dual roles as interim deputy administrator and Operations Section manager. At the beginning of 2025, Shawn returned to his full-time position as Operations manager.

The division has named Adam Breitenstein as its new interim deputy administrator as we wait to hire a new administrator. Adam has been with WCD for 12 years and has been the Performance Section manager for the past eight years. He is another strong leader with in-depth knowledge

of the workers' compensation system and WCD.

We've also hired [Katie VanCleave to be the new Claim Records manager](#) following longtime employee Edie Roster's retirement.

Along with new leadership, WCD also has a new mission statement: We ensure an equitable workers' compensation system for all. WCD serves a wide audience of workers' compensation participants from workers and employers to insurers and attorneys. WCD's goal is to ensure that every customer, no matter how many times they interact with the division, gets what they need. WCD strives to have an open-door policy so that anyone can bring forward concerns or issues.

In addition to contacting WCD employees directly, you can participate in Management-Labor Advisory Committee (MLAC) meetings. MLAC serves as a forum for labor and business to explore and resolve challenges within the Oregon workers' compensation system.

In September 2024, the Department of Consumer and Business Services announced that the pure premium rate for workers' compensation costs

would decrease in 2025 for the 12th year in a row. The pure premium is the base rate workers' compensation insurers use to determine how much employers pay for medical costs and lost wages. On average, employers will pay 91 cents per \$100 of payroll for workers' compensation costs. You can read the [full press release here](#).

Looking ahead to 2025, the legislative session is in full swing. WCD currently has two bills it is focusing on. You may remember these as legislative concepts mentioned in last summer's WCD Today. The first bill, [House Bill \(HB\) 2802](#), is regarding lump sum payment of permanent partial disability (PPD) awards. The second, [HB 2800](#), is an update to worker leasing language.

In HB 2802, the division is proposing an amendment to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 656.230 that would require insurers to make a lump sum payment to an injured worker whose award becomes final by operation of law or who waives their right to request reconsideration of a notice of claim closure. The current law states that a worker can request their PPD award as a lump sum if any conditions named in Oregon

Administrative Rule (OAR) 436-060-0060 are met. Those conditions are that the worker must waive their right to appeal the adequacy of the award and that the award must be final by operation of law.

However, the Oregon Court of Appeals concluded that, because of the way the law and rule are written, insurers can deny a worker's request for

a lump sum payment if the worker has waived their right to appeal and their appeal rights have not expired. Workers would then need to wait the required 60-day period for their PPD award to become final before they request a lump sum payment.

The second bill updates language used to describe worker leasing companies. It allows

insurers to report coverages change through electronic data interchange and insurers to provide coverage through a multiple coordinated policy model.

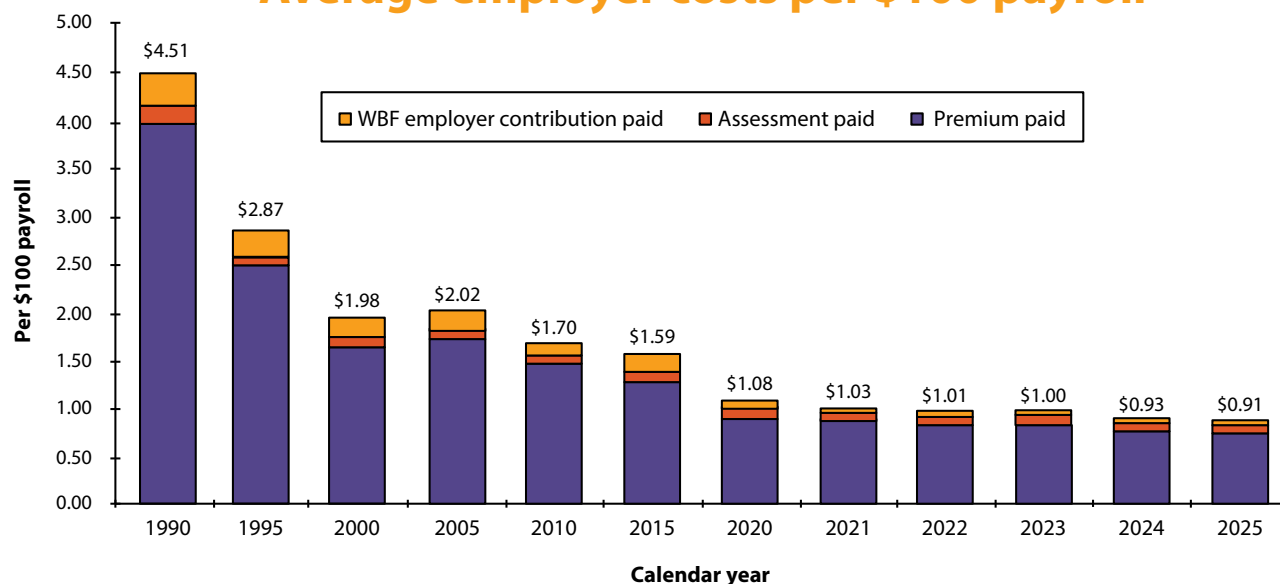
The bill would adopt more modern language as used by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. A "worker leasing company" would instead be referred to as a "professional employer organization (PEO)." The bill would also update the characterization of the relationship between client workers and PEOs.

Currently, PEOs report coverage data by paper form to the division. The bill would allow PEOs to report coverage data through electronic data interchange directly to their insurer. Lastly, a multiple coordinated policy model makes tracking and reporting coverage more efficient and clear.

2025 will also see [significant progress in WCD's modernization efforts](#) with choosing a vendor to build its new system.

With everything that's happening this year, please reach out if you have any questions or concerns to [matt.d.west@dcbs.oregon.gov](mailto:matt.d.west@dcbs.oregon.gov). ■

## Average employer costs per \$100 payroll



*Total employer costs per \$100 payroll for loaded pure premium, premium assessment, and Workers' Benefit Fund cents-per-hour assessment. Loaded pure premium includes insurer costs, known as expense loading factors. Historic figures are adjusted to reflect the 2022 mix of employment and payroll.*

# Meet the new Claim Records manager: **Katie VanCleave**

**After 25 years of public service, Claim Records Manager Edie Roster retired in October 2024.**

Her replacement, Katie VanCleave, brings a wealth of management experience to the Workers' Compensation Division.

Interim Administrator Matt West said, "The division is excited to welcome Katie as part of its team. Her extensive leadership experience will be an asset to the Claims Unit and WCD. We are happy she has chosen to transition to public service."

VanCleave comes from the field of veterinary medicine and had been a manager for eight years. As Claim Records manager, she will provide direction and advice on the administrative, operational, and procedural components of the statewide workers' compensation injured-worker claim reporting system. The information received by the Claim Records Unit is the foundation of the Department of Consumer and Business Services' ability to monitor the timely and accurate delivery of benefits to injured workers and to determine performance levels of regulated insurance companies.

Outside of work, VanCleave spends the majority of her time with her husband and their two small boys. She is a proud Oregonian, who lives in her

hometown of McMinnville.

When she is not chasing her kids, Katie enjoys hiking, camping, spending time with her two dogs and two cats, listening to podcasts, and going wine tasting.

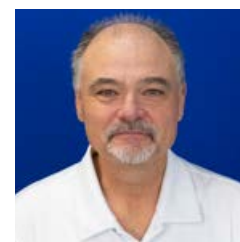
"I am so honored to be joining the incredible WCD team," VanCleave said. "After almost 15 years working in veterinary medicine, I was eager to

embark on a journey into the public sector to be able to serve the community I love so dearly. I look forward to contributing to the incredible work that the WCD team does!" ■



*Katie VanCleave*

# Preferred Worker Program success story: Dylan Nugent



*Tim Kessel*

*By Tim Kessel, worksite modification consultant, and Autumn Blake, communications coordinator.*

**Dylan Nugent was only 20 years old when a workplace**

**injury changed his life in 2019.** Dylan

had been working as a machinist for less than a year when his right hand was caught in a press and crushed. The injury resulted in a wrist fracture as well as the amputation of three fingers.

Dylan worried he wouldn't be able to return to his job at injury. What would he do for work? How would people react to his injury?

Dylan took five months off work to recover from the injury. His employer-at-injury did not offer him

*Preferred worker Dylan Nugent at his workstation at Pacific Tool & Gauge.*



*Dylan operates a pneumatic vise.*

transitional work during that time.

Since the injury, Dylan has been unable to climb ladders, do any heavy lifting, or do fine manipulation. The work he is able to do is limited from the loss of his digits and nerve damage to his dominant hand.

The Preferred Worker Program (PWP) helps injured workers who are left with permanent work restrictions after their workers' compensation claim is closed. It provides benefits to both workers and employers. PWP reduces the costs to the employer to bring on a new employee and it gives the injured worker resources to get them back to work safely despite their new physical restrictions.

Dylan was able to participate in a vocational training program to become a machinist/computer numerical control (CNC) operator through Rogue Community College, which was made possible by his employer's workers' compensation insurer. The program allowed Dylan to expand his knowledge and marketability as a machinist and operator.

Finding a new job after an injury can be difficult. PWP benefits provided Dylan with \$500 of work clothes to help him. He found a position as a machinist and CNC operator with a local manufacturer, Pacific Tool & Gauge. He has been working for the employer for two years.

Dylan's employer took advantage of the worksite modification benefit allowing him to stay within his permanent work restrictions. The employer was able to expand Dylan's job duties and make him a more valuable employee. The program provided \$2,500 worth of tools for Dylan to use. Dylan said the pneumatic vises and left-handed calipers are among

his favorite.

The employer was also able to use the wage subsidy offered through PWP. The subsidy reimburses an employer 50 percent of the worker's wages for 183 days. With the savings provided by the wage subsidy, Pacific Tool & Gauge has been able to invest in additional equipment and technology to refine and automate its processes.

The employer is also exempt from the workers' compensation premium cost of covering Dylan for three years. If Dylan has a new injury claim during that time period, the Workers' Compensation Division will repay the employer's insurer the costs of the new claim.

PWP has enabled Dylan to work in an environment where he doesn't need to worry about his work restrictions preventing him from being successful. He's in a job he enjoys and where he can learn new skills while the employer has a hardworking, reliable worker on its team. More than new tools and cost-savings, benefits through PWP have given Dylan confidence that, despite his injuries, he can have a promising career in his chosen field.

If you would like to learn more about PWP and other return-to-work resources, visit [oregonpwp.com](http://oregonpwp.com), email [pwp.oregon@dcbs.oregon.gov](mailto:pwp.oregon@dcbs.oregon.gov), or call 800-446-3948. ■

*An automatic parts cleaner and polisher eliminates the need for Dylan to use fine motor manipulation.*





# Modernization Program update

*By Heather Williamson, Modernization Program manager.*

## 2024 was a big year for modernization at the Workers' Compensation Division (WCD).

The previously known core system implementation was renamed to the Workers' Compensation Information System (WCIS). WCIS will encompass the core system, employer business, dispute resolution, enforcement and providers, and claims and benefit programs as major workstreams within the WCIS project. This will allow a more robust and complete implementation and potentially save an additional year or more of work.



*Heather Williamson*

This decision was made after meeting with each program area in WCD to map out current processes and discuss what a future state model might look like. Mapping was done over 14 months starting in October 2023 and concluded

in November 2024. Sixty-nine staff members contributed 523 hours to create 141 future state models. It was an incredible amount of work done by managers and subject matter experts within WCD. These models form the basis of our business requirements, or the functions that we need a new system to perform to support the work of the division.

While all of this was going on, WCD released a request for information (RFI) to vendors. The RFI resulted in four vendor demonstrations. The demonstrations helped WCD understand the possibilities and limitations of the technology it will be able to use for WCIS.

Modernization's next step will be to publish a request for proposals (RFP) to vendors. The RFP is scheduled for the first quarter of 2025. The RFP will give vendors a chance to bid on the project and produce a more complete plan proposal.

The RFP will take us one step closer to having system that allows real-time data sharing between WCD and its customers.

[Sign up](#) to receive modernization updates through GovDelivery ■



# Oregon's involvement in the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions



Jenni Bertels

*By Jenni Bertels, electronic data interchange coordinator and claim reporting policy analyst.*

## The mission of the International Association of

**Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions (IAIABC) is to find solutions to reduce harm and aid recovery from occupational injuries and illnesses.**

IAIABC is the largest trade association of workers' compensation jurisdictional agencies in North America. Along with these government entities, various private organizations involved in the delivery of workers' compensation coverage and benefits participate. Since it was founded in 1914, IAIABC has been providing information and education on workers' compensation policy, regulation, and administration for its members.

Oregon actively participates in all 10 IAIABC committees and one council through in-person events and virtual meetings scheduled throughout the year. These committees are Dispute Resolution, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Claims, EDI Medical and ProPay (state reporting and electronic billing), EDI Proof of Coverage, EDI Systems, International, Medical Issues, Regulation, Research and Standards, and Work Disability Prevention and Return to Work,

and the EDI Council. There is also the Associate Member Council, but only industry partners are allowed to participate. In September 2024, Interim Administrator Matt West was appointed to the IAIABC Board of Directors, so Oregon's participation will only grow from there. The board is charged with setting the vision, mission, and strategic direction of the association.

The IAIABC creates and maintains EDI standards



development, which are data standards for when industry electronically sends data to jurisdictions. These standards are important for both jurisdictions and industry, so all parties are on the same page when it comes to data sharing. This especially helps industry, so it can use the same playbook for all the jurisdictions it does business in. There are four EDI standards: EDI Claims, EDI Medical, EDI Proof of Coverage, and Electronic Medical Billing. Oregon participates in all EDI standards except for EDI Claims and that is a planned phase of Modernization in the future.

IAIABC also provides many resources for its members such as a list of workers' compensation laws across the country, a WorkCompare database that compares claim benefits across states, a periodic Perspectives Magazine, and the podcast Accidentally. During COVID-19, IAIABC had many helpful resources as jurisdictions were navigating the everchanging waters of the pandemic.

Another useful set of tools used frequently by Oregon is the IAIABC member directory, using online communities that are web boards for each of the committees to share information, where jurisdictions can ask questions and share

with only other jurisdictions, where jurisdictions can share information and news with industry, or discuss potential changes to the EDI data standards that are under review.

Because of our innovative programs, Oregon was proud to receive the 2017 IAIABC President's Award for excellence in Return to Work. In 2016, I received the award for Outstanding Achievement in EDI as the Oregon EDI Coordinator.

Two in-person events are held each year: the IAIABC Forum in the spring and the IAIABC Convention in the fall. At least one Oregon representative attends each breakout session, forum, committee, and council meeting at the in-person events and brings notes and information back to share with the division. These events are crucial to attend because of all of the information sharing and networking we do with other jurisdictions and industry partners in sharing successes, challenges, and brainstorming solutions. These partnerships are not just valuable in person, because staff make connections they can use year round since those relationships have been cultured at these events.

Since IAIABC is a trade organization, every stakeholder group in the workers' compensation system attends these events. This includes jurisdictional regulators and administrators, government and regulatory affairs personnel, medical directors and providers, insurers, claim administrators, attorneys, service providers, modernization vendors, and administrative law judges.

Many crucial issues are tracked at the IAIABC for jurisdictions and information is shared on topics such as advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion and accessibility in workers' compensation systems; unveiling the importance of artificial intelligence and data in workers' compensation insurance; tracking modernization across jurisdictions; and looking at trends affecting medical care in workers' compensation. All these topics are relevant to Oregon as it looks to the future. We look forward to continued active participation and partnership in the coming years. ■

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**WCD** Recursos en español



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### Contacto

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### Contáctenos

#### División de Compensación para Trabajadores

350 Winter Street NE  
P.O. Box 14480  
Salem, OR 97309-0405

800-452-0288 (línea de información)  
503-947-7585 (preguntas generales)  
503-947-7810 (recepción central)

[workcomp.questions@dcbs.oregon.gov](mailto:workcomp.questions@dcbs.oregon.gov)



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### Otros programas

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[Ombudsman para Pequeños Negocios](#)  
[Junta Directiva de Compensación para Trabajadores](#)  
[Comunicaciones Multiculturales](#)

# Worker webpages now in Spanish

WCD has translated worker-focused webpages into [Spanish](#). They include the overview of the workers' compensation system, how to report an injury and file a claim, obtaining medical care, getting paid for time loss, and what happens when a claim is closed.

The division has also translated its "[Worker's Journey Through the Workers' Compensation Division](#)" infographic into Spanish. You can view the English version on the division's [injured worker overview webpage](#).

If you have feedback about these pages, contact [Teri Watson](#). ■

# WCD in the community



*Clockwise from top left: Yasmin Castaneda Benavides, Mikaela Polk, Zoe Tacadena; Christy Johnson*

On June 4, Employer Compliance Unit Field Investigators Yasmin Castaneda Benavides and Mikaela Polk hosted a table at the 2024 Blue Mountain Occupational Safety & Health Conference in Pendleton while Reemployment Specialists Christy Johnson and Zoe Tacadena hosted a table on behalf of the Preferred Worker Program (PWP).



On June 5, PWP Worksite Modification Consultants Bob Williams (pictured left) and Oscar Garcia Lopez (not pictured) attended the Governor's Marketplace Conference and Tradeshow.



On June 8-9, PWP Worksite Modification Consultant Oscar Garcia Lopez (pictured right) attended the Fair Resource event at Tillamook Bay Community College.



PWP Reemployment Assistant Jeffrey Warburton (right) attended the Building Better Business Together Entrepreneur and Small Business Fair at Mt. Hood Community College on June 21 with Dave Waki (left) from the Office of the Small Business Ombudsman.



On Aug. 24 and 25, Oscar Garcia Lopez gave a presentation about PWP during the Consulate of Mexico's mobile services event at Klamath Community College in Klamath Falls.



On Sept. 7, Charity Steffen, Employment Services Team manager, (not pictured) and Oscar Garcia Lopez teamed up for a PWP presentation in Spanish at the Salem Public Library.

During the weekend of July 20 and 21, Oscar Garcia Lopez hosted an informational table for PWP at a mobile service event hosted by the Consulate of Mexico.



On Sept. 7, Zoe Tacadena and Christy Johnson held an English-language workshop in the next room.

On Sept. 14, Appellate Service Representative Francis Starling from the Appellate Review Unit (ARU) attended the Oregon Psychiatric Physician Association's fall conference.



On Sept. 16 and 17, Christy Johnson (left) and Worksite Modification Consultants David Barcroft (not pictured) and Tim Kessel represented PWP at the Central Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Conference.



Appellate Service Representative Christy Watson-Husky with ARU (left) and Medical Reviewers Steph Doster and Jessica Lowman (not pictured) from the Sanctions and Medical Resolution Team attended the Rural Health Conference in Bend on Oct. 2 through 4.





## Where to Find Preferred Workers?



The Preferred Worker Program posts jobs for employers who are looking specifically for Preferred Workers.

Your local Worksource office will help you register and set up your job postings.

Oregon Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR)

- VR locates individuals with disabilities to get and keep a job that matches their skills, interests, and abilities.
- Preferred Workers are eligible for the free services of VR.
- VR offices are located throughout Oregon.

[www.oregonpwp.com](http://www.oregonpwp.com)

On Oct. 28, Zoe Tacadena (left) and Bob Williams attended the Governor's Marketplace Conference and Tradeshow in Portland.

On Nov. 5, 2024, Oregon OSHA hosted the fourth Spanish-language Safety, Health, and Your Rights at Work conference in Hillsboro. Oscar Garcia Lopez and Benefit Consultant Rachel Cancino hosted a booth to share information about PWP with attendees.

