

The Preferred Worker Program

A program of the Oregon
Department of Consumer and Business Services'
Workers' Compensation Division

Who is eligible?

Both employers and workers may be eligible for preferred worker benefits.

Employers — Must have and keep Oregon workers' compensation insurance and follow Oregon workers' compensation laws.

Workers — Must have an on-the-job injury that keeps them from going back to their regular work due to permanent work restrictions.

What kind of help can I get?

Premium exemption

Premium exemption saves an employer the costs of workers' compensation insurance premiums and premium assessments on a preferred worker for three years. During this premium exemption period, the employer does not report, and the insurer cannot use the preferred worker's wages to calculate insurance premiums or premium assessments. To use this benefit, the employer must notify the Workers' Compensation Division within 90 days of hiring the preferred worker.



Claim cost reimbursement

This protects the employer from the costs of a new workers' compensation claim if the preferred worker has a new injury during the three-year premium exemption period.

Wage subsidy

The Workers' Compensation Division repays the employer 50 percent of the preferred worker's wages for 183 days. The wage subsidy may be used as many times as needed, up to a maximum total reimbursement of \$40,000.

Employment purchases

The Workers' Compensation Division can purchase goods or services that are required to help a worker find, accept, or keep a job in Oregon:

- **Tuition, books, and fees** for classes to update existing skills or meet job requirements (\$1,000 per use, up to \$2,000).
- **Temporary lodging, meals, and mileage** for overnight travel if required to attend classes (up to \$1,000).
- **Tools and equipment** required for the job (\$2,500 per use, up to \$5,000).
- **Clothing** required for the job and not provided by the employer (\$500 per use, up to \$1,000).
- **Transportation-related purchases** that enable the worker to commute, excluding vehicles, up to \$1,000 within the first 90 days of employment.
- **Union initiation fees or dues** owed, plus one month's current dues (up to \$1,000).
- **Moving expenses** for a job in Oregon if the new job is 50 miles or more from the worker's home.
- **Occupational certification, licenses, and related testing costs** (\$500 per use, up to \$1,000).

WORKER PROTECTION



Workers'
Compensation
Division

Department of Consumer
and Business Services



- **Worksite creation costs** required to purchase equipment and tools when an employer creates a new job (\$5,000 per use, up to \$10,000).
- **Placement assistance** to help a preferred worker find a job.
- **Miscellaneous** purchases not covered by any other category (up to \$2,500).

Worksite modification

The Preferred Worker Program can purchase items needed to overcome injury-caused permanent limitations (\$35,000 per use, up to \$50,000). By

using these modifications, workers can get the job done safely and within their limitations. For example, a house painter who can no longer climb a ladder or scaffold could use a scissor lift to get the job done.

Who is a preferred worker?

A person is designated a preferred worker because they have some measure of permanent limitation due to an on-the-job injury.

The Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services' Workers' Compensation Division is committed to helping injured

workers get back into the workforce by providing incentives to businesses such as:

- Premium exemption
- Claim cost reimbursement
- Wage subsidy
- Worksite modification
- Employment purchases needed for a worker to find, accept, or keep employment

What is the Preferred Worker Program?

The Preferred Worker Program helps qualified Oregon preferred workers get back in the workforce. The program is funded by the cents-per-hour payments into the Workers' Benefit Fund paid by workers and employers. Preferred workers can offer Oregon employers benefits that, by hiring them, save the business money and decrease its operating costs.

Want to know more?

We are available to discuss the program or go to your location for a site visit.

Contact us

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