**“AGING WORKFORCE”**

You may be an organization that is experiencing fewer younger more workers and older workers as the population at large continues to age.

The older worker provides a depth of knowledge and skills that are difficult to replace.

The risks associated with any worker are a reality and when considering the safety of your older workers the following should be considered:

**Manual Handling:**

Lower back disorders are generally a concern in any business where manual handling is required. As a worker ages their likelihood of a lower back injury increases. Also the longer a person is performing manual handling task the greater the risk.

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Conduct a risk assessment. WorkSafe provides a risk management checklist that assists you in assessing your workplace risks. The key is to address the issues before they become a problem.

Assess whether handling loads can be decrease in size.

Purchase appropriate lifting equipment.

**Musculoskeletal Disorders:**

Generally musculoskeletal disorders are due to impairments of the muscles, nerves, tendons, bones etc

Often treatment and medical intervention can address such disorders however sometimes the outcome of medical intervention can be unsatisfactory.

The symptoms can range from discomfort to extreme pain.

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Assess whether rotation of duties are an option and/or beneficial, ensure open lines of communication with staff, ongoing proactive management of your injury register and ensure the working hours are reasonable and meet the abilities of your worker.

**Stress**

Work related stress can be an issue for many reasons. Some of the reasons are that a worker could be expected to perform tasks outside their capacity, could be bullied as a result of their age, could be struggling to meet deadlines etc

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Ensure that staff and supervisors receive the appropriate training to understand appropriate behaviors for the role they are performing. All staff should be versed in what constitutes bullying and your organization should have a workplace bullying policy in place that your staff have read and understood

**Temperature**

Older workers have greater difficulty in maintaining internal body temperatures.

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Provide reasonable working temperature if possible.

Ensure appropriate rest breaks are provided.

Ensure that your workforce is hydrated and comfortable.

**Workplace Noise**

An older worker may have suffered noise induced or age related hearing loss making it more difficult to hear hazards or potential risks.

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Ensure the use of hearing protection in noisy areas.

Have your staffs hearing tested to reduce the possibility of occurrence of related injury.

**Vision**

The older worker may have problems with their vision without ever having it assessed or may require glasses.

**Some tips for minimizing Risk:**

Ensure that a worker wears their glasses as required to perform a duties safety.

Have regular eye tests for your workers to assess possible problems.

**Prevention and managing a healthy workplace**

Pre-employment medicals are a useful tool in identifying problems and ensuring workers capabilities are appropriate for the duties on offer.

Ongoing medical examinations on a regular basis eg, annually, are also a good investment and may assist in the prevention and management of work place injuries and claims.

WorkSafe may offer some assistance in this regard should your organization consider staff medicals a viable option,

Should you wish to discuss any details within this document or in respect of your work place injuries do not hesitate in contacting Trish Cappola on 0404 014821.