



INJURED WORKER SUPPORT GROUP



You are not ALONE , Join US 6:30 pm the first Thursday of every month

Working While Injured

"I'm sore for days every time I do that job". Does this sound familiar? Have you ever felt the same way? Most likely there is something that needs to be looked at within your work station. The first step is to report it to your supervisor. If we all report these experiences before they become serious, action can be taken. Hazards will not resolve themselves or go away. But documenting your own experience with certain jobs or work will go a long way to protecting yourself and improving the workplace.

Keep track of the time and date when you reported it to your supervisor. You might be asked to fill out a report. Make sure you do and let the employer know exactly what you were doing prior to the occurrence. You are actually protecting yourself as well and your union brothers and sister as well.

It is in the best interests of the Company also, provided they investigate, act and follow up. It's important to start a journal or a diary and track your pain-related occurrences. Ask for a copy of any incident reports, and be sure to keep your committeeperson in the loop. Keep all of this information together; it will save complications if the problem is not corrected down the road.

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) enforces Ontario's Labour laws, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). During workplace visits, Ministry inspectors will be asking questions about the steps your organization has taken to prevent workers from developing musculoskeletal disorders (MSD injuries). The MOL's Safe at Work Ontario compliance strategy has a specific focus on increasing the number of proactive inspections made by MOL ergonomists. In addition, annual MSD blitzes.

Workplace repetitive strain injuries can be serious despite the initial effect being minor such as a sore wrist or elbow. The consequences are far reaching and can affect every aspect of our lives. There is a strong link between exposure to the work-related risk factors for MSD and the development of these disorders. MSD prevention can be simple and inexpensive. Often making straight-forward and basic changes can reduce MSD risks significantly.

Does your Job require:

- Work that places the elbows above shoulder height, or the hands behind the body.
- Tasks that call for frequent bending or twisting of the neck.
- Work requiring frequent or prolonged grasping and holding objects, or frequent wrist movements.

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- Work that requires frequent lifting of items from below knee height or above the shoulders.
- Work requiring frequent bending or twisting at the waist.
- Tasks that involve carrying, lifting, pushing or pulling heavy or awkward loads.
- Spending long periods with a body part held in any one position without movement.

These are warning signs, which can often lead to injury or disability if not corrected. Talk with your WSIB rep if there is a causal link, you might qualify for WSIB coverage for treatment.

Occupational Health and Safety Act 25 (2) (h) states:

Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for “the protection of a worker”
This is required by law under the Act!

We are the experts on how we feel after working and what is acceptable for us. We all have different shapes, sizes, strengths and abilities. Job are not always created with these variations in mind. Fortunately we have the Act, Human Rights Code and Union representation to make improvements in the protection of workers. Talk with your worker rep if you are experiencing pain and discomfort associated with your job. Representatives have training and access to resources to assist you.

Can I be fired?

You cannot be fired because of an injury, plain and simple. Ontario has human rights legislation which requires an employer to accommodate any medical condition you have, subject to some limitations. One of those limitations would be if it were impossible for the employer to accommodate your condition, or if your condition were such that you had no reasonable prospect of returning to your job. However, that is difficult for an employer to prove, especially without any evidence that they consulted you before firing you. You can claim wrongful dismissal, a failure to accommodate and possibly additional damages for the way you were treated. You can sue in court for wrongful dismissal; you can also include a human rights claim in that lawsuit. Or you can complain to the provincial Human Rights Tribunal. Employers have a duty to accommodate employees with disabilities, unless it would cause undue hardship, even if their injury is not work-related. If you need human rights legal advice or help filing an application with the Human Right Tribunal of Ontario, contact your Union Representative.

Our Injured Workers support Group meets the first Thursday of every month at the Local.

Meetings start at 6:30 pm and run until 8:00 pm.

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