

TO: Subcabinet Officials
Agency Heads
Deputy Administrators for Management

FROM: John Surina
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Administration

SUBJECT: Safety, Health, and Return-to-Employment (SHARE) Initiative

In response to the President's SHARE Initiative (attachment 1) and in support of the Department of Labor's goals to reduce injuries, illness, costs and lost production days, USDA is establishing its own SHARE Initiative. SHARE Initiative replaces the Federal Worker 2000 Initiative, but reflects similar goals and objectives.

In 2003, USDA experienced 4,419 injury/illness/death cases; of that total, 1,873 resulted in time lost from work. The Department's total cost for workers' compensation was \$72,269,808. As the table below shows, the number and the cost of claims have risen at a significant rate over the last three years.

USDA Workers' Compensation Cost and Claim Data			
	2001	2002	2003
Total Costs	\$66,749,990	\$69,517,675	\$72,269,808
Lost-Time Injuries	1,664	1,724	1,873
No-Lost-Time Injuries	1,739	2,007	2,539
Fatalities	5	11	7
Total Injuries/Fatalities	3,408	3,742	4,419

We have set Department-wide improvement goals that reflect a 3 percent reduction in the rate of total and lost-time injury cases, a 1 percent reduction in lost production days, and a 5 percent increase in the timely filing of workers' compensation claims forms for each of the next three years. All USDA agencies are to participate in the SHARE Initiative and are assigned Department-wide goals as a minimum.

Department-wide SHARE Goals				
	Baseline	2004	2005	2006
Lost-Time Case Rate	1.75	1.70	1.65	1.60
Total Case Rate	4.12	4.00	3.88	3.76
Timeliness of Claims	29.1	30.6	32.1	33.7
Lost Production Days	66.3	65.6	64.9	64.3

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Agencies are also encouraged to set their own, more challenging goals targeting even greater improvements. We will post agency baseline data and accomplishments for each SHARE goal on a periodic basis at the SHEWD's internet web site <http://www.usda.gov/da/shmd/shmd1.htm>.

To assist agencies in meeting their goals, we have developed recommendations for reducing agency injuries/illnesses/fatalities and costs (attachment 2). Please review these recommendations for incorporation into your agency's safety, health and workers' compensation programs (OWCP).

We look forward to working with your staff. Thank you for your leadership in this important program area. If further information or assistance is required, you may contact Jim Stevens, Director, SHEWD, OHRM at (202) 720-8248.

Attachments

cc: Agency Safety and Health Managers

Attachment 2

Recommendations for Reducing Agency Injuries/Illnesses and Costs

A. Recordkeeping:

1. Ensure that OSHA Injury/Illness logs are maintained at each worksite and that an accident investigation is performed for each lost-time injury. Periodic review of the log should be conducted to identify trends and ensure that worksite hazards are corrected.
2. OWCP forms must be accurately coded to identify the type, source and cause of injuries. These codes are used by agency safety and health staff as the basis for actions required to identify, evaluate and prevent accidents and injuries. Prohibit the use of “unknown” codes on OWCP claims forms (e.g., 999 codes). Ensure that a review process is in place to ensure that “unknown” codes are not used. The use of these codes makes our database inaccurate and unreliable for use in injury prevention efforts.
3. The notice of traumatic injury, occupational disease or death should be filed with the OWCP district office with jurisdiction. Employing agencies must retain documents in connection with workers' compensation claims. These documents should be maintained in folders apart from the Employee Medical Folder or Official Personnel Folder. These folders are considered an alternate location for the records, which remain under the jurisdiction of OWCP. Their retention and disposal is covered by the OWCP Records Retirement Schedule, which requires that case file material be maintained for two years after case closure.
4. Individual case files are protected under the Privacy Act, and only the employee, his or her representative (if any), and agency personnel may routinely have access to a given file. The records must be safeguarded in the same manner as other personnel material.
5. Employing agencies should use electronic claims submission once it is available within USDA.

B. Safety and Health Program Administration

1. Review agency policies and procedures to ensure that they meet the requirements of 29 CFR Part 1960, "Basic Program Elements for Federal Occupational Safety and Health Programs and Related Matters."
2. Ensure that adequate staffing has been designated at the appropriate levels to fully implement the agency's safety and health program and achieve the goals of the SHARE initiative.
3. Establish agency-wide SHARE initiative goals that target the agency's major causes of injuries/illness. These goals may differ from, but should not be less than, the Department's overall goals.
4. Establish an incentive program that encourages employees to meet the goals of the SHARE initiative.
5. Utilize the agency's SHARE initiative goals to evaluate the performance of managers and supervisors.
6. Encourage the participation of employee labor representatives in meeting the agency's SHARE initiative goals.
7. Utilize injury/illness data to establish priorities for targeted prevention programs, and to eliminate known hazards.

C. Workers' Compensation Program Administration

1. Review agency policies and procedures to ensure that they meet the requirements of Title 20 CFR Parts 1-25.
2. Ensure that adequate staffing has been designated at the appropriate levels to fully implement the agency's Workers' Compensation program and achieve the goals of the SHARE Initiative.
3. Establish agency-wide SHARE initiative goals that target the agency's timeliness and lost production goals.

4. Supervisors and managers must submit the CA-1 or CA-2 to the agency Workers' Compensation Coordinator within 24 hours of the injury or incident.
5. Stay in touch with injured employees while they are receiving compensation and identify jobs suitable for them. Take steps to reemploy recovered or recovering employees as soon as the medical evidence shows that this is possible. This will reduce the number of lost production days. Accommodations may include part-time or modified work schedules, reassignment to vacant positions, alternative worksites, restructuring or redistributing job duties and functions.
6. Provide basic and advanced training in OWCP requirements and procedures for all coordinators. Educate supervisors and managers on the OWCP program and the benefits of a return-to-work effort. Online first line supervisor training is available at:
<http://www.dol-esa.gov/share/>.
7. Establish accountability by charging program costs down to the lowest possible organization level. Integrate workers' compensation program management into the supervisor's and manager's performance reviews.