

Texas Department of Insurance **Workers'** **CompUpdate**

a publication of the Division Of Workers' Compensation volume 1, number 3 September 2006

Changes Offer Doctors New View of System

PROVIDING FOR BETTER HEALTH CARE delivery in the Texas workers' compensation system is one of the primary goals of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation. Commissioner Albert Betts said providers have an opportunity to reassess their roles in the system as changes to health care under House Bill (HB) 7 are implemented.

In time, Commissioner Betts said health care providers should see a reduction in paperwork and more certainty about payment. The Division's approach to monitoring the quality of health care provided also has undergone significant changes.

"When an injured employee comes to a health care provider for treatment in our system, the first concern always should be getting that employee well and back to work as soon as possible," Commissioner Betts said. "Too often, providers are presented with obstacles that make worker's compensation cases an unwelcome addition to their practices."

Commissioner Betts met with the leadership of statewide medical groups and invited comments from health care representatives at stakeholder meetings to determine how the Division can regain providers' confidence in the system. The Division partnered with the Texas Medical Association to provide training on properly filing workers' compensation medical bills. In August, Division staff made presentations in Lubbock and Fort Worth on improvements to workers' compensation health care delivery under HB 7.

A restructured Medical Quality Review Panel (MQRP) that encompasses all

health care provided in the workers' compensation system, and includes objective measures for quality of care, is another change that could benefit providers. By statute, the MQRP makes recommendations to the Medical Advisor regarding sanctions, restrictions, and deletions of health care providers from the list of approved doctors. The new review structure aims to retain doctors in the system who are performing well; it also provides for notification and sanction of providers who are not providing treatment according to clearly-stated care standards.

Doctors and medical organizations actively participated in a study of workers' compensation medical quality review earlier this year. Several of their suggestions were incorporated into the new MQRP process. Also, Commissioner Betts invited suggestions for improving the process from the Texas Medical Board; the board's Executive Director subsequently nominated several physicians to serve on the MQRP.

Another reason for providers to consider giving workers' compensation a second look is the onset of certified Workers' Compensation Health Care Networks. At press time, 12 networks had been certified

continued on Page 4

"Too often, providers are presented with obstacles that make workers' compensation cases an unwelcome addition to their practices."

Albert Betts
Commissioner of Workers' Compensation

INSIDE

Guidance Offered for Dispute Settlement	5
Plain Talk About Medical Quality Review	6
RTW Best Practices for Employers	10

ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH CARE is critical to our workers' compensation system. Health care providers who provide good care should not be hindered from doing so by unnecessary fee disputes, delayed reimbursement or lack of information from the Division.

One of my goals over the last several months has been to identify ways to support those providers who are doing their part. Some of the initiatives to which I have given the highest priority are:

- Ensuring through compliance efforts that doctors are paid on time with a minimum of frustration and that insurance carriers are appropriately handling bill payment;
- Better defining parameters for the treatment of employee injuries and giving doctors better certainty of payment through the drafting of treatment guidelines;
- Taking a look at peer reviewers, designated doctors and all providers in the system through our Medical Quality Review Panel to ensure injured employees receive appropriate health care;
- Reducing the number of outstanding medical disputes and ensuring the dispute process is timely;
- Providing better education and information sharing with providers and their staffs; and
- Identifying areas in the state where injured employees have trouble locating a provider to treat them and developing strategies to address any access problems.

Perhaps the biggest change in system health care is coming about with certified Workers' Compensation Health Care Networks. As networks become more prevalent, I am confident the overall quality of health care will continue to improve and that providers' experience with workers' compensation cases will be more positive.

Albert Betts

Commissioner of Workers' Compensation

Contact **Workers' CompUpdate** at:
Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation
Public Information/MS-3B
7551 Metro Center Drive, Ste. 100
Austin, TX 78744-1609
(512) 804-4200
(512) 463-4201 fax

Workers' CompUpdate is published quarterly. To be included on the publication e-mail distribution list, send a request to:
public.information@tdi.state.tx.us

Direct questions or suggestions about newsletter content to:
(512) 804-4200
or write:

Workers' CompUpdate
MS-3B, 7551 Metro Center Drive,
Ste. 100
Austin, TX 78744-1609

The staff that prepares this newsletter has no role in proposing, drafting, editing, or approving TDI rules or policies or interpreting statutes.

Workers' CompUpdate should not be construed to represent the policy, endorsement or opinion of the Commissioner of Insurance, the Commissioner of Workers' Compensation or the Texas Department of Insurance. By necessity, summaries of proposed and adopted rules cannot explain their full complexity. Readers interested in complete information about administrative rules should consult the versions published in the *Texas Register*.

To the best of the staff's ability, information presented in this newsletter is correct as of the publication date, but scheduled dates and proposed rules and amendments may change as the adoption process goes forward.

Workers' CompUpdate is available online at:
www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/indexwc.html
under "News and Publications."

Provider Seminars Explain Recent System Changes

THE DIVISION RECENTLY PRESENTED two half-day educational seminars for health care providers titled "How House Bill (HB) 7 Improves Health Care Delivery in the Texas Workers' Compensation System" in Lubbock and Fort Worth. The Division plans to offer additional seminars at other

The seminars are tailored to answer questions about workers' compensation rules and procedures from health care providers and their staffs.

major metropolitan areas this year as part of an effort to educate providers and encourage them to participate in the system.

In addition to providing an overview of system changes, the seminars are tailored to answer questions about workers' compensation rules and procedures from providers and their staffs. The seminars are offered free of charge. Seminar topics include certified Workers' Compensation Health Care Networks, disability management (treatment and return-to-work guidelines, treatment planning), preauthorization, pharmacy, peer review standards, payment for health care, electronic medical billing, medical dispute resolution, case management, treating doctor exam to define the compensable injury, required medical exams, and designated doctor exams.

Dates and locations for additional seminars will be announced by the Division in the near future. For more information, call the Outreach & Education section of the Division's Workplace and Medical Services at 512-804-4685 or send an e-mail to medicalbenefits@tdi.state.tx.us.

To keep up-to-date on Division seminars and education about the workers' compensation system, visit the TDI website at:
www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/services/outreachcal/puboutreach.html

Changes Offer Doctors New View of System

continued from Page 1
by TDI since the beginning of the year; about 20 applications for certification are pending. Networks make independent arrangements with providers to treat injured employees according to network fee schedules and disability management plans. TDI's Health and Workers' Compensation Network Certification and Quality Assurance Division posts information about networks on the agency website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/consumer/wcnetie.html.

Non-network health care providers should also benefit from the adoption of disability management rules by the Division. This approach to treating injured employees sets guidelines for appropriate treatment with the cooperation of the in-

jured employee, the employer and the insurance carrier. One expected result can be a reduction in billing disputes between the provider and the carrier.

Commissioner Betts said input from health care providers, like that from other system participants, is critical to making the system changes work.

"We've had excellent participation from the health care community in this process," he said. "I will continue to listen to health care providers to find out what their needs are and what suggestions they have for more improvement."

Division Seeks Members for Medical Quality Review Panel

Request for Qualifications Posted on Agency Website

The Division of Workers' Compensation has posted a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to become a member of the Medical Quality Review Panel (MQRP) on the agency website.

The full RFQ document is available at www.tdi.state.tx.us/commish/legal/lrsfqmgrp.html.

Preferred qualifications for MQRP members include:

- Specialization in areas including, but not limited to, spine surgery, chronic pain management, neurology, radiology and certain diagnostic fields;
- Knowledge of evidence-based medicine. Under Texas Labor Code §401.011(18-a), "evidence-based medicine" means the use of current best quality scientific and medical evidence formulated from credible scientific studies, including peer-reviewed medical literature and other current scientifically based texts, and treatment and practice guidelines in making decisions about the care of individual patients;

- Demonstrated five years experience in workers' compensation or utilization review; and
- Five years experience as a designated doctor, peer reviewer, licensing board reviewer or IRO reviewer.

Applicants may submit responses by mail or hand-delivery to the following:

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
Office of the Medical Advisor, MS -9
7551 Metro Center Drive, Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78744

Applicants must submit responses to this RFQ by 3 pm CDT, November 1, 2006.

All questions concerning this RFQ may be directed in writing to: Denise DeJardo, Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation, Office of the Medical Advisor, MS -9, 7551 Metro Center Drive, Suite 100, Austin, Texas 78744.

Guidance Offered for Dispute Settlement

In settling workers' compensation indemnity disputes, insurance carriers, injured employees and their representatives now have an additional resource to follow in structuring the settlement to comply with Texas law and Division rules.

The Division recently posted a document titled "Settlement Guidance" on the TDI website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/dwc/divisions/documents/sttlmntguidance.pdf.

The document outlines the provisions and terms that should be included on the DWC Form 25, *Benefit Dispute Settlement*, as well as helpful hints for preparing a settlement. One new recommendation is that parties should provide an explanation stating why they believe the settlement is in the best interest of the injured employee.

Bob Lang, Director of Indemnity Dispute Resolution for the Division, said Texas Labor Code §408.005(e)(3) provides that a settlement may only be approved if,

based on the facts of the claim, the Commissioner of Workers' Compensation (or a designee of the Commissioner) is satisfied that the settlement "is in the best interest of the claimant."

The Settlement Guidance document is intended to reduce the number of resubmissions necessary due to the absence of information showing that the settlement is in the best interest of the injured employee, Lang said. The document was developed with input from a focus group of attorneys who represent other state agencies, injured employees, and insurance carriers.

Lang said the new, more structured guidance from the Division for settling indemnity disputes will also help each injured employee better understand the terms, as well as the implications and consequences, of the settlement.

Commissioner's Ombudsman Appointed

Commissioner Albert Betts recently announced the appointment of a Commissioners' Ombudsman to advise him on responding to complaints and referrals from workers' compensation system participants and the general public. The new position on the Commissioner's staff is being filled by Andrea Tole, who has worked in field office customer service, medical dispute resolution and compliance program areas for the Division.

"In order to be more responsive to certain types of general complaints that I receive outside of our formal compliance and fraud enforcement processes, I have named an Ombudsman to my staff," Commissioner Betts said. "Our sharper focus on resolving complaints within the framework of our rules and laws will lead to a better workers' compensation system for everyone."

The Division already administers a violations referral process for system participants to utilize if a violation of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act is suspected. TDI also maintains an Insurance Fraud Hotline (1-888-327-8818) for the public to report fraudulent acts related to all types of insurance including workers' compensation.

In another related development, the Division's Complaint Resolution and Customer Services team began automating some complaint handling in late August. (See Division Briefs, Page 7).

Plain Talk About MQRP

By Ken Ford, M.D., Acting Medical Advisor

SINCE ITS CREATION IN 2001, the Medical Quality Review Panel (MQRP) has held an important place in the Texas workers' compensation system. The goal of the MQRP is to guarantee injured employees reasonable access to medical treatment for properly diagnosed conditions within recognized standards at a reasonable cost. The MQRP helps the Medical Advisor keep doctors who meet these standards in the system and keep doctors who don't meet the standards out of the system.

In November 2005, Commissioner Betts appointed a group of stakeholders to research and address questions about the role of MQRP and new requirements for medical quality review under House Bill (HB) 7. Many improvements were proposed and significant changes implemented. Key features of the new review process can be found on the TDI website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/mr/mqrpchanges.html.

I am a part of this stakeholder group. I am also working with Commissioner Betts to implement the group's recommendations to get the MQRP back up and running as quickly as possible. I also worked with Commissioner Betts to make sure there are enough doctors available to provide quality health care to injured employees in Texas. My special focus has been on getting the very best doctors in the state to serve on the MQRP. The re-

sults, to date, are promising. Perhaps some of these doctors will contribute to this column in the future.

I work as a member of the Division's Quality Monitoring and Enforcement Team to review medical performance and provide input and recommendations to the Commissioner to consider when imposing sanctions, conditions, restrictions, or in deleting doctors from the Division's list of approved doctors. This team helps set the direction for what will be reviewed by the MQRP. Under HB 7, the scope of quality review by the Medical Advisor and the MQRP has been extended to include Independent Review Organizations, peer reviewers, and designated doctors.

I am optimistic about the future. I have seen a lot of interest from the medical community in the Commissioner's efforts to clear up the mission of MQRP. If we can reinforce the practice of appropriate health care by the majority of providers out there, and discourage and sanction inappropriate practices, I think we can get where we need to be. Much has been accomplished, and there is much left to do.

Dr. Ken Ford was appointed Acting Medical Advisor for the Texas workers' compensation system in March, 2006. He has more than 30 years experience treating work-related injuries and formerly served as a flight surgeon in the United States Air Force.

Work Group Receives Medical Review Update

REPRESENTATIVES FROM professional medical associations, medical licensing boards, insurance carriers as well as individual health care providers were briefed on August 23 by Commissioner Albert Betts on changes to the Division's Medical Quality Review Panel (MQRP). Many of the stakeholders had served on a working group brought together by the Commissioner earlier in the year to recommend MQRP revisions.

Commissioner Betts reported on how the Division had responded to a broad

range of stakeholder issues ranging from how to objectively select service areas and doctors for review, to how to encourage high performing doctors to participate in the process. A high priority was to make the quality review process as transparent and user friendly as possible to all parties.

Other changes highlighted at the meeting included: use of multiple reviewers to perform concurrent and independent reviews; Informal Resolution Conferences; and simplified MQRP application and contract processes.

Workers' Compensation Conference December 4-5

The Texas Department of Insurance (TDI), Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) will hold its annual Worker's Compensation Conference December 4-5 at the Doubletree Hotel in Austin.

Registration is \$95 per person and is limited to 500 persons. Online registration is available on the TDI website at www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/seminarsandeducation.html. Conference room rates are available at the Doubletree Hotel Austin; \$85 for single occupancy and \$135 double occupancy. Contact the hotel at 1-800-222-TREE or 512-454-3737 and reference the "DWC Conference" to make reservations.

Texas Workplace Fatalities Rose in 2005 Census

In 2005, Texas recorded a 12.5 percent increase in the number of work-related fatalities. A total of 495 fatal occupational injuries occurred last year, compared to 440 fatalities in 2004. There were 5,702 fatalities in the U.S. in 2005, about a 1 percent decrease from the revised total of 5,764 fatal work injuries reported in 2004, according to the most recently available data released in August by the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI).

The Division compiles information on all work-related fatalities occurring in Texas for the CFOI, a program jointly administered with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). DWC annually releases total fatality counts and descriptive data in an effort to provide information to promote occupational safety, and to reduce occupational injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

A total of 200 persons were killed in transportation incidents in Texas in 2005, a 3 percent increase from 2004. Transportation incidents were the leading cause of occupational fatalities last year. The number of deaths resulting from assaults and violent acts increased by 24 percent in 2005 compared to 2004.

More Networks Certified to Treat Injured Employees

TDI recently certified additional Workers' Compensation Health Care Networks to treat injured employees in the Texas workers' compensation system. At press time, a total of 12 networks have been certified since January 2006 under House Bill (HB) 7 passed by the 79th Legislature.

The newest networks are: Forte, Inc.; First Health Texas HCN; First Health/St. Paul Travelers; First Health/AIGCS; Genex Services, Inc./Genex Health Care Network; Liberty Mutual Managed Care, Inc./Liberty Health Care Network; and International Rehabilitation Associates, Inc./Intracorp. The other certified networks are: Corvell Healthcare Corp./CorCare; Memorial Hermann Health Network Providers, Inc./Worklink; Concentra HCN; and Texas Star Network/Concentra. For more information and a listing of geographic areas served by the networks, go to: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/wcnet/wcnetworks.html.

Division Seeks System Medical Advisor

The Division is seeking a physician to serve as full-time Medical Advisor for the Texas workers' compensation system. Job Posting No. 06-246 can be viewed on the and agency website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/jobs/jobs.html.

Customer Service, Complaint Intake Processes Upgraded

On August 25, the Division's Complaint Resolution and Customer Services team relocated from the Austin Central Office at 7551 Metro Center Drive, Ste. 100 to the TDI Hobby Building at 333 Guadalupe St. in Austin.



The move allows the automation of complaint handling for the workers' compensation system similar to processes already in use by other TDI divisions.

Brent Hatch, Deputy Commissioner for Field Services, said the relocation of the complaint resolution and customer service team was "seamless" with no interruption in services to system participants.

Injured employees and others who visit the Division's Metro Center location will still receive personal assistance. The toll-free telephone number for customer assistance remains 1-800-372-7713.



number for customer assistance remains 1-800-372-7713.

Commissioner Betts Attends SAWCA Conference

In July, Commissioner Albert Betts attended the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators (SAWCA) annual conference in Baltimore. The four-day meeting included presentations about current issues for state workers' compensation systems, including health care provider education. Commissioner Betts serves on the SAWCA Executive Committee; the Division will host the group's 2007 meeting in Austin.

Issues discussed included maintaining or abolishing second injury funds; reviewing treatment guidelines; access to medical care; medical fees; carrier performance review; and employer compliance, especially mandated coverage of contractors and subcontractors.

SAWCA membership includes workers' compensation administrators from the Virgin Islands and 17 states including Texas.

New Address for Carriers to Provide Contact Information

In March, Commissioner Albert Betts and Commissioner of Insurance Mike Geeslin signed Commissioners'

Bulletin #B-0013-06 urging all insurance carriers, regardless of whether the carrier is currently utilizing a certified workers' compensation health care network, to make a telephone number available to allow TDI, the Division, the Office of Injured Employee Counsel, or a health care provider to confirm the network status of an injured employee's claim.

TDI recently updated the mailing address, telephone, fax and e-mail information for insurance carriers to use in order to comply with the request in the Bulletin.

The updated contact information for carriers to use for this purpose is:

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
Insurance Coverage
Mail Code MS-96
7551 Metro Center Drive, Suite 100
Austin, TX 78744-1609
fax: 512-804-4346
phone: 512-804-4355
e-mail: bpipost@tdi.state.tx.us

Carrier telephone numbers provided to the Division are posted at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/wcnet/documents/nwcarrierphones.pdf

Training for Insurance Carrier Peer Review Data Call

A Notice of Peer Review Data Collection was issued in August under the authority of Texas Labor Code §§413.008, 413.013, and 414.002- 414.004. Selected insurance carriers were directed to gather data for peer reviews in September and October, 2006 for submission to the Division. A training session for carriers about the peer review data collection process was held at the Division's Central Office in Austin on August 16. An instruction sheet for carriers to follow in providing peer review data is posted on the agency website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/mr/peerdata.html.

New Notice of Injured Employee Rights

As required in House Bill (HB) 7, Office of Injured Employee Counsel Public Counsel Norman Darwin recently prepared a new Notice of Injured Employee Rights and Responsibilities for the workers' compensation system. The new notice was approved in June and is posted on the TDI website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/information/workerrights.html.

Commissioner's Bulletin No. B-0022-06 was signed in June to urge system participants to begin using the new notice immediately. 28 TAC §120.2 is being amended to include the new notice language and provisions for distribution of the notice.

RULES WRAP- UP:

Peer Reviewer, Designated Doctor Rules

The qualifications and functions of designated doctors and peer reviewers in the Texas workers' compensation system are clarified in rules adopted by Commissioner Albert Betts in late July.

Designated doctors are assigned by the Division to recommend a resolution of a dispute over the medical condition of an injured employee. Peer reviewers are health care providers who, at the request of insurance carriers, perform administrative reviews of the health care provided in a workers' compensation claim.

The peer reviewer rules (28 TAC §180.22 and new §180.28) were effective August 16, 2006. The designated doctor rules (28 TAC §180.21) will be effective in January 2007.

Electronic Exchange of Medical Bill Data

Commissioner Albert Betts adopted rules in July to allow health care providers, insurance carriers and the Division to exchange medical bill data electronically. The

rules, Electronic Formats for Electronic Medical Bill Processing (28 TAC §133.500), and Electronic Medical Bill Processing (28 TAC §133.501), were published July 28 in the *Texas Register* and were effective August 10, 2006. Under § 133.501, providers and carriers can receive a waiver from exchanging data electronically if the exchange creates an unreasonable financial burden.

Rulebook Supplement 2006-04 containing the electronic billing rules is available online at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/rules/tableofcontents/supplements.html.

To purchase a hard copy of the rulebook supplement, contact the Division's Publications Section at 512-804-4240.

Treating Doctor Examination for Compensable Injury Rule

In June, Commissioner Albert Betts adopted rule section Treating Doctor Examination to Define the Compensable Injury (28 TAC §126.14). The new section was effective July 9, 2006, and was made necessary by passage of House Bill (HB) 7 by the Texas Legislature that created § 408.0042 of the Texas Labor Code.

Labor Code § 408.0042 requires the injured employee to attend one examination per workers' compensation claim with the injured employee's treating doctor at the request of the insurance carrier. This examination is a voluntary option for insurance carriers to utilize as a tool in managing claims.



The status of all rules under development at the Division is posted at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/rules/tableofcontents/rulesoptions.html.

Best Return-to-Work Practices for Employers

ON AUGUST 1, the Division submitted a report titled “New Approaches to Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Injured Employees in the Texas Workers’ Compensation System” to the Texas Legislature. The report was mandated under House Bill (HB) 7 and contains a description of actions taken by the Division and the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to improve communication about and coordination of vocational rehabilitation programs. The report is posted on the agency website at: www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/mr/rtw/documents/rtwdarstdi.pdf.

Among the actions taken by the Division to improve communication regarding return-to-work outcomes has been educational outreach on best practices for Texas employers to follow in return-to-work programs. Some of these best practices include:

- Effective safety and training programs conducted regularly including accurate reporting of incidents and accidents, new employee basic safety, and targeted remedial training;
- Improved communications and working relationships with local health care providers;
- Communication with claims payers about the importance of early identification of “at risk” cases;
- Changing workplace practices to welcome injured employees back into the workplace for the benefit of the employees and the company;
- Accurate and current information available to injured employees during and after recovery; and
- Education of management and employees about the value of each employee to themselves, their families, their co-workers and the company.

Pilot Project to Assist Small Employers

SMALL EMPLOYERS IN TEXAS may be reimbursed by the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers’ Compensation for up to \$2,500 annually for the costs of workplace modifications, equipment, tools, furniture or devices, or other related costs the employer has incurred to bring an injured employee back to work in a modified duty or alternate duty capacity.

To be eligible, employers must have:

- At least 2 but not more than 50 employees.
- Current workers’ compensation insurance in Texas, or be a certified self-insurer.
- An employee who has a job-related injury that was accepted as compensable by the workers’ compensation insurance carrier.
- Paid for any workplace modifications, purchase any special equipment, tools, furniture or devices, or pay any other related costs to bring injured employee back

to work in a modified or alternate duty capacity.

The total amount of reimbursements to all eligible small employers is limited to \$100,000 annually. Approved reimbursements are subject to funds availability. This program was established to be funded through August 31, 2008.

The Division welcomes inquiries from employers about the pilot program and the application process. Call 512-804-5000 or e-mail rtw.services@tdi.state.tx.us for more information or to obtain an application form.

Texas state agencies and political subdivisions of the state are not eligible to participate in the program.

Improving Customer Service on Front Lines

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS and responsibilities of injured employees, employers, insurance carriers, health care providers and other participants in the workers' compensation system? With direction under House Bill (HB) 7, the Division set out last Fall to improve its public outreach efforts and answer this question.

Section 402.021 of the Texas Labor Code provides, in part, that the state's workers' compensation system must "effectively educate and clearly inform each person who participates in the system as a claimant, employer, insurance carrier, health care provider, or other participant of the person's rights and responsibilities under the system and how to appropriately interact within the system."

Brent Hatch, Deputy Commissioner for Field Services, says field office managers and other staff are trained to disseminate information about the system to participants.

"Every person trained for this effort is made responsible for providing consis-

tent, useful information to the public and system participants about state law and the Division's procedures and processes," Hatch said.

One part of the outreach initiative has been quarterly "brown bag" educational sessions scheduled by each of the Division's field offices. To date, 57 sessions have been conducted across the state; 17 sessions were planned in August, 2006. Hatch said the informal meetings allow system participants to ask questions of Division staff outside of formal settings related to a specific claim. Topics of future brown bag sessions are often suggested during the informal question-and-answer sessions.

Staff also have given briefings to local district offices of state legislators and spoken to groups at the request of system participants.

Division Contact Information..... (www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/dwcccontacts.html)

Customer Service	1-800-252-7031 or local office/(Austin) 512-305-7238 (Injured Worker Hotline; Claim Services; Hearings Customer Relations; Medical Review; Medical Dispute Status; Legal & Compliance)
Workplace Safety/OSHCON	1-800-687-7080 (Accident Prevention Services; WC/Safety Resource Center; Workplace Safety)
Safety Violations Hotline	1-800-452-9595
Fraud Hotline	512-463-6700 or 1-888-327-8818
Technical Help Desk	1-888-4-TXCOMP (1-888-489-2667)
Government Relations	512-804-4250
Human Resources	512-804-4450
Speakers' Bureau	512-804-4578
Open Records	512-804-4434
Public Information/Publications	512-804-4200/ 512-804-4240
Switchboard	512-804-4000
Stay at Work/Return to Work	512-804-5000
Office of Injured Employee Counsel	1-866-EZE-OIEC (1-866-393-6432)

Texas
Department
of Insurance
Workers' CompUpdate

Health Care Technical Supplement

(A supplement with information for system participants who use Division of Workers' Compensation medical billing and medical dispute resolution processes.)

Claiming Travel Reimbursement for Health Care

Health care providers and injured employees frequently ask Division staff about the procedure for employees to request reimbursement for travel expenses.

Injured employees who travel more than 30 miles one way from where they live or work to see a health care provider may request reimbursement for their travel expense. (28 TAC § 134.110).

The insurance carrier may deny the request, however, if the injured employee could have received the same medical treatment within 30 miles of where they live or work. A denial from the carrier can be reviewed by the Division in a Benefit Review Conference.

To receive reimbursement, the injured worker must submit a DWC Form 48, *Request for Travel Reimbursement*, with documentation such as receipts within one (1) year. Reimbursement is based on the travel rate for state employees on the date the travel occurred, using the shortest reasonable route. Employees also can be reimbursed for food and/or lodging, if it is a reasonable expense, and if they provide receipts. The total amount for food and/or lodging cannot exceed the per day reimbursement paid to state employees when traveling.

The current state reimbursement rate amounts are \$85 per night for lodging, 44.5 cents per mile and up to \$38 per day for meals.

For questions about travel reimbursement, contact Customer Assistance at 1-800-252-7031.

For online versions of health care supplements, go to www.tdi.state.tx.us/wc/publications.html.

Texas Department of Insurance
Division of Workers' Compensation
7551 Metro Center Drive, Ste. 100
Austin, TX 78744

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage Paid
A u s t i n , T e x a s
Permit No. 1613