



"Improving conditions at work and in life."

FIT Ergonomics: Keeping your work force safe and healthy

CASE STUDY: *Mission Linen Supply*

Delivery Drivers at Risk for Back Injuries at Work
Ergonomic Training Improves Workplace Safety

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SITUATION:

Mission Linen Supply, a company that launders uniforms and linens for restaurants, hospitals and other institutional organizations, has 50 locations in five western states--2,700 employees, only 800 of whom are delivery drivers. Yet in 2003 they discovered that their delivery drivers were responsible for almost half the reported workplace injuries.

Deliveries and collections are essential to many businesses, but can be some of the most dangerous activities for workplace safety. Work injuries like back pain, joint stress, muscle strain and tearing are commonplace for delivery drivers.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, delivery truck drivers are considered a high incident occupation for back injuries. The Bureau found that sitting in the same position while driving may cause as much trouble as lifting large items once drivers arrive at their next location.

Mission Linen's drivers pick up soiled product and return them when they have been cleaned. They deal with big, awkward loads. These loads can get very heavy, particularly when it is raining. Sitting in and exiting the vehicles were also causing back injuries.

According to the latest Liberty Mutual Safety Index, the cost of workplace injuries continues to rise. Absenteeism due to back pain disability is estimated to cost industry \$20 billion to \$40 billion per year in the United States, say researchers at Ohio University's College of Health and Human Services.

Dr. Tom Leamon, Director of the Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety noted that workplace injuries don't have to happen. "Understand why your employees get hurt and address these sources."

SOLUTION

Mission Linen implemented a worker safety program delivered by Future Industrial Technologies (FIT) where skilled healthcare practitioners, certified as injury prevention specialists, provide workplace safety training.

"With employees spread in small populations all over the West we needed a tailor made workplace safety and ergonomic training program for our drivers that could be implemented site by site," says Don Bock, Director of Risk Management at Mission Linen. "The Future Industrial Technologies (FIT) BACKSAFE® program was perfect for our needs."

One concern was to have all employees trained in a consistent manner and FIT's ability to provide professional trainers at every location was one of the reasons Mission chose them to do the ergonomics and safety training.

Employees responded very positively. "The excellent educational content of the BACKSAFE class was hand-tooled to our specific line of work," commented Steve O'Connell, General Manager for the plant in San Francisco. "The practical component of the training called the "obstacle course" was customized specially for us. It brought the theory into action and drove home the point of applying proper lifting techniques in real life situations. The stretching component taught them how to relieve any tired or stressed muscle groups."

RESULTS

"We have used the FIT program to train our delivery drivers in 15 locations so far," said Brock. "We have yet to experience a back injury where the training has been implemented. It's cut our absenteeism to nothing and our workers comp costs are going down."

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About Future Industrial Technologies

FIT offers workplace safety and ergonomics training programs. BACKSAFE® teaches employees how to perform their specific job tasks in a manner that is biomechanically correct. SITTINGSAFE® teaches office employees how to adapt their existing workstations so they are ergonomically correct. These injury prevention programs make your workplace safer and are proven to reduce injuries and worker compensation insurance costs. For more information contact Dennis Downing at:

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