

FUTURE INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGIES



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California Workers' Compensation Changes Hit Wrong Target

Governor Schwarzenegger changes how workplace injuries are evaluated. The new law that changes how workplace injuries are evaluated, aimed at saving businesses in California billions of dollars in workers' compensation insurance costs, has received mixed reviews from business owners, insurance carriers and Union officials.

The new system changes the factors determining how much money permanently injured workers receive as compensation for their injuries and will result in some workers who are not severely disabled, and still physically able to earn a living, getting less money for their injuries.

It has been criticized by union officials and labor leaders and while many California business owners and executives have expressed their support for the new system, some are taking a different approach-preventing injuries, lowering absenteeism and keeping their workers healthy and happy.

Frank Dominguez, a supervisor for the Los Angeles County Assessor's Office Special Investigators Unit, has spent many years bringing awareness of ergonomics training to the County and the Union (Local 660) that services Los Angeles county workers.

After trying various programs Dominguez heard about Future Industrial Technologies (FIT) and their programs delivered by health-care professionals who are trained as injury prevention specialists.

The Backsafe® and Sittingsafe® programs are based on Bionomics™, a field within ergonomics training that includes the adjustment of the physical environment and the body. These bionomic programs have been used in diverse industries such as aero-space, municipalities, banks, hospitals, warehouse/trucking firms as well as many small businesses to substantially reduce workplace injuries and worker compensation costs.

The results of the program? LA County's worker compensation costs have been cut dramatically and where there were 19 to 20 claims per year, there are now only one or two.

Mission Linen and Uniform Service of Santa Barbara, CA, is another company that has chosen training to reduce worker compensation costs. Mission Linen launders uniforms and linens for restaurants, hospitals and other institutional organizations.

They have 50 locations in five western states, and 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.

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.

"With our employees spread in small populations all over the West we needed a tailor made workplace safety and ergonomic training program that could be implemented site by site," says Don Bock, Director of Risk Management at Mission Linen. "We have used the FIT program to train our delivery drivers in 15 locations so far and we have yet to experience a back injury where the training has been implemented. It's cut our absenteeism to nothing and our insurance costs are way down."



This article may be reprinted in its entirety provided that the following resource is left intact:

Future Industrial Technologies, Inc. (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.

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