

Worksite modification success story

by Heather Grogan

Worker disability

Mary injured both shoulders, her left leg, and her low back while employed as a baker and cook for a retirement home. As a result of these on-the-job injuries, Mary has permanent limitations that restrict her from lifting more than 10 pounds.

Work setting and obstacle

Mary returned to her regular job, but she wasn't able to perform the job duty of mixing dough for cookies, pies, cobblers, and other baked goods. Mary uses a five-gallon mixing bowl that weighs up to 25 pounds when it's filled. She has to lift and carry the mixing bowl from the mixer to the food preparation table up to 10 times per day.

Modification

The program provided a go-lift with custom attachments for lifting and tilting the five-gallon mixing bowl. Now, Mary can move the mixer weighing more than 10 pounds without straining her shoulders. Since this worksite modification was implemented, Mary has been employed for 18 months, and she continues to work without injury. ■



Five-gallon mixing bowl and prep table



Go-lift removing full mixing bowl from machine



Go-lift moving mixing bowl



Go-lift tilting mixing bowl

Frequently Asked Questions

by Christy Johnson

Q I have been with my employer for a year, is it too late to offer my employer preferred worker benefits?

A No. You can offer the wage subsidy benefit up to three years from your hire date or from the date you were made eligible for preferred worker benefits, whichever is later.

Q Is there a form I need to give my employer to start premium exemption?

A No. Your employer automatically receives the premium exemption benefit for you. You simply provide your employer with a copy of your preferred worker card. The employer sends a copy of the card to its insurer.

Q How do I get a Wage Subsidy Agreement form to my employer?

A The Wage Subsidy Agreement may be included with your preferred worker identification card. If you do not receive a form, you can go online at www.oregonpwp.info. You can view and print preferred worker brochures, bulletins, rules, and forms. Also, you can find and print the Wage Subsidy Agreement under "Forms."

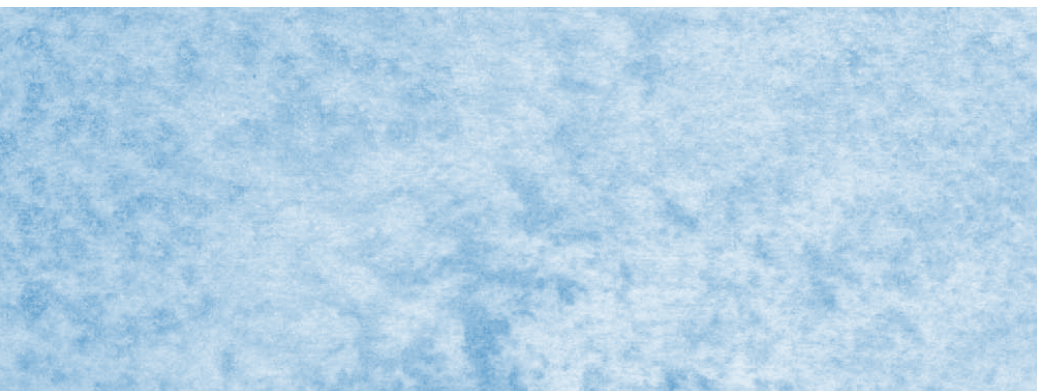
Q How do I know what equipment is needed to modify my job so I am working within my limitations?

A You do not need to know what type of equipment might be used to modify your job in order to request

a worksite modification. When you request a worksite modification, a consultant will be assigned the request. The consultant will meet with you and your employer to learn about your job duties. The consultant will identify obstacles and tasks that exceed your injury-caused permanent restrictions. The consultant will provide worksite modification recommendations based on input from you and your employer.

Q I have an employer who would like to hire me, but the position would be new to the business. The employer doesn't have the money available to create a new office. The employer would need to purchase a desk, chair, laptop, and other essentials needed to do my job. Is there anything the Preferred Worker Program can do for me?

A Yes. As of Dec. 1, 2007, the Preferred Worker Program added a new category, "Worksite Creation." Worksite Creation costs are limited to equipment, furnishings, or other items the employer needs to create a new job for the worker. All items purchased are the property of the employer with a maximum expenditure of \$5,000. ■



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Cool tools

by Robert T. Williams

One of the greatest things the Preferred Worker Program can do for an injured worker is to change, adapt, or modify a job so the injured worker can successfully perform his or her job duties, even if the worker has severe limitations. This is done through the \$25,000 work-site modification benefit.

Some jobs require little or no modification for an injured worker to perform 100 percent of the new job duties. For example, a chair or anti-fatigue floor mat might be all that is needed to help an injured worker return to his or her job. However, these cases are so rare that we refer to them as “fall-off-the-log mods.” Most jobs take skill and effort to successfully modify. Twenty years of experience has shown me that the overwhelming majority of jobs can be successfully modified using “off-the-shelf” tools and equipment. Nonetheless, sometimes modifications can only succeed using custom fabrication or newly invented solutions developed in conjunction with a Preferred Worker Program consultant’s guidance. High-cost modifications are typically successful because problems are identified early and definitive, clear solutions are implemented. When work modifications exceed \$25,000, sometimes we need employers to help contribute to the costs, but successful modifications correlate with positive, flexible workers and employers. In addition, it is rare that we are not able to modify a job.

Some simple but popular tools and equipment can make a big impact in reducing the force and weight of carrying heavy items.

Hand trucks are an old invention. After finally inventing the wheel, early innovators took two wheels, stuck one on either end of a stick axle, fastened a little wood board platform between the wheels, and tied on a tree branch for a handle. Presto! The first human-powered pushable hand truck was fashioned. Later, our ancestors made bigger versions of the pushable hand

truck, which they tied behind draft animals and called them carts. Hand-truck design went unchanged for about 2.7 million years: just two wheels, a handle, and a little platform at the bottom that slid under boxes to lift and carry them. No matter what you carried, everyone had to use the same hand-truck design.

Thankfully, these days, new designs have been developed and these modifications can help injured workers. There are hand trucks with brakes to slow and ease the force of moving loads down ramps. There are hand trucks that move sideways so you can carry plywood or Sheetrock on the hand truck and still go through a door or down a narrow hall. New designs of lightweight aluminum means the hand truck can convert from a flat, horizontal cart, to a 45-degree design that will tilt back a six-foot-tall stack of water bottles and rest the over-center weight on a second set of rear wheels, eliminating the required lift force when you tip back a tall 300-pound load.

There are even powered hand trucks that allow you to climb up stairs with zero force. There are self-propelled hand trucks that push themselves up ramps, hills, and down long halls. There are off-road hand trucks powered by gas motors that can haul heavy loads over rough ground. There are electric-powered drum-lifting hand trucks that pick up the drum and tilt it back on a rear support wheel to ease moving a 200- to 700-pound load. There are even hand trucks for to move bales or trees in burlap root balls.

So, if you are faced with a job obstacle too great for your particular lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling limitations or restrictions; call the Preferred Worker Program to find out what kinds of cool tools might be available to help you succeed without getting hurt again.

Visit the following manufacturer Web sites for more information about the hand trucks and products described in this article:

Gas-powered hand truck - <http://www.angelfire.com/nc/littleredmule1/>

Drum-handling hand truck - <http://www.liftomatic.com/index.asp>

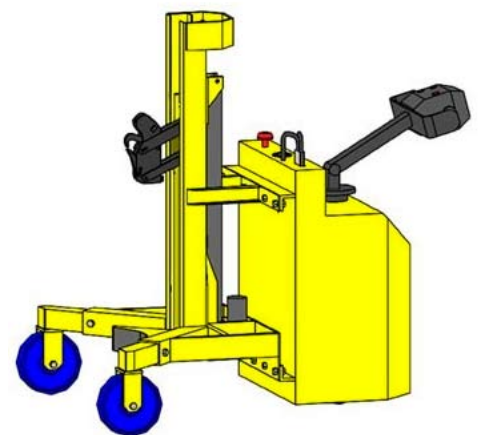
Un-powered stair climber - <http://www.stairclimber.co.uk/>

Battery-powered stair climber - <http://www.magliner.com/> and <http://www.liftkar.com/nav/sano.htm>. ■

Stair-climbing hand truck



Sideways-moving hand truck



Electric-powered-drum lift



Denise Workman

New Employment Services Team assistant manager – Denise Workman *by Ana Contreras*

The Workers' Compensation Division continues to transform and reorganize in order to provide exceptional services and resources to workers' compensation system participants.

It's been five months since the Rehabilitation Review Unit merged with the Re-employment Review Unit to form the Employment Services Team. The team's manager, Delmi Hernandez, created a group to help build a seamless return-to-work process. With this goal in mind, Hernandez hired Denise Workman as the team's assistant manager. Since Aug. 18, Workman has been helping diverse groups come together for a common goal – to help system participants get information about their rights and responsibilities and returning injured workers to productive jobs, while helping control workers' compensation costs.

Workman has more than 16 years of management experience. She was a branch manager for Marion and Polk Schools Credit Union, a mortgage loan broker for Washington Mutual, and a customer care manager for T-Mobil Corporation. Workman had the opportunity to see amazing growth with T-Mobil. During the six years that she was at the company, it grew from three employees to more than 1,000.

Workman credits her management skills with helping her relate to people at her current job. "Bringing such a diverse group of people together to form a new team is exciting," she said. "I'm impressed with the people I have met and worked with. They have a determined and focused attitude about their job. They are very dedicated and do everything within their power to help injured workers return to work."

Some improvements that Workman already sees involve communication. The team is working as a group to enhance its knowledge base and has organized groups involving members of different program areas to generate and implement ideas to improve workers' compensation services. Each group has been given a different focus and uses various strategies to improve return-to-work programs. The groups will meet again before the end of the year.

Besides having extraordinary management skills, Workman has many other talents. She owns her own business, Denise Workman Photography. Last year, she spent more than two months traveling throughout the U.S. by car, and she has spent time in Europe, Mexico, and Canada. Workman is an avid Beaver fan and loves to cook international cuisine. ■