

PREFERRED WORKER Adviser

Spring 2002

Information for Preferred Workers who haven't yet used their return-to-work incentives

Sell yourself! *by Barbara Smith*

When injured workers face a change in occupation, the first question that often comes to their minds is, "What can I do?"

Sometimes workers don't realize they have the valuable transferable skills and personal traits that employers want.

Transferable skills are acquired through natural talent, training, or experience gained in working, raising a family, volunteering, or hobbies. They're skills that can be used in a variety of jobs and occupations. Make a list of your own transferable skills, then make them known through your resume. Think about each one ahead of time so you are prepared to talk about specifics during your interviews. Here are some examples of transferable skills:

- solving problems
- mediating conflicts
- supervising others
- managing budgets
- selling ideas
- effective writing
- negotiating
- interviewing
- computer literacy
- reading blueprints
- teamwork skills
- dealing effectively with other people
- coordinating projects
- compiling and analyzing data
- coping with deadlines
- effective listening and speaking
- managing multiple tasks
- teaching/coaching
- use of common machine shop tools
- use of common computer software
- strong math skills
- effective decision-making

Employers also look for certain personality traits. If you have these traits, you should take credit for them and be prepared to give examples that show you have them. Make a list of your own best qualities. Here are some examples:

- optimism
- flexibility
- punctuality
- sense of humor
- creativity
- honesty
- high energy
- empathy
- sincerity
- professionalism
- integrity
- responsibility

This is not an exhaustive list. You probably know your own best personality traits. If you need some help deciding, ask someone who knows you well enough to tell you what they think.

Remember, the activities of many jobs can be learned on the job. But often, skills and attributes like the ones on the lists above are required from the very first day. Don't overlook some of your best assets. Employers are looking for them! Sell them to the prospective employer. ■

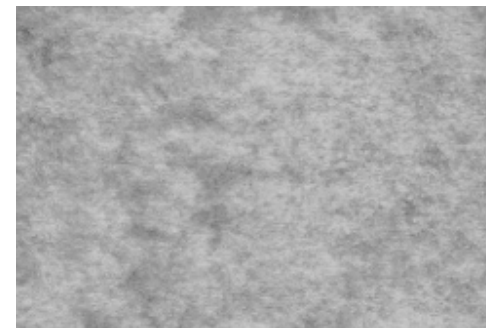
Success story

by Craig Sorseth

Anne, a 40-year-old machine feeder/offbearer injured her back when she fell from a work platform to a concrete floor. Her injury resulted in traumatic T10 paraplegia with a permanent inability to use her lower extremities and a lateral transfer lifting limitation of 25 pounds. Because of the severity of her injury, she was eligible for exceptional disability status in the Preferred Worker Program according to OAR 436-110-0005(6).

Unable to return to her regular job, she was offered and accepted a new position with her employer-at-injury. Her new job as warehouse/training coordinator required that she spend a substantial amount of time working at a desk in both the company's office and warehouse. She was also expected to maintain inventory records and perform some parts-

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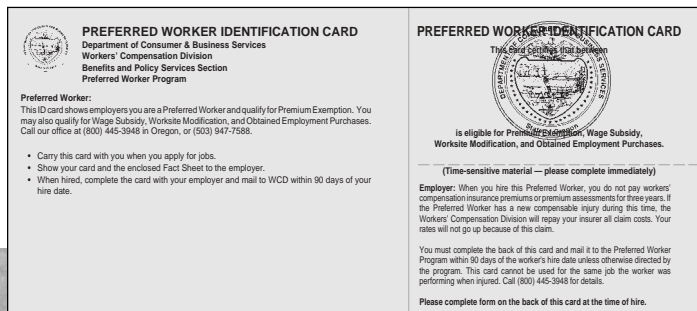
Important time frames to remember within the Preferred Worker Program *by Kerry King*

To avoid missing out on use of parts of the Preferred Worker Program, there are some important time frames to remember.

Preferred worker identification card

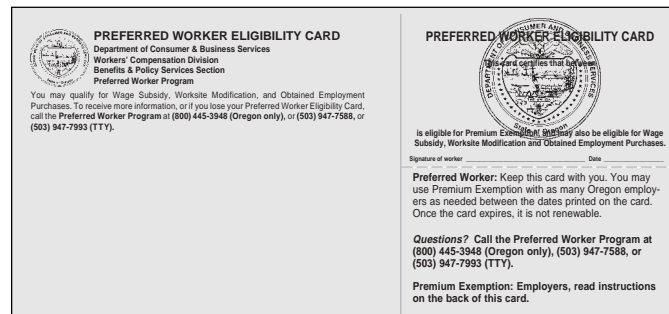
A preferred worker identification card is valid for three years from the date of issue. This means that you have a three-year window in which to use premium exemption; after that, you'll be ineligible for the program. Don't wait too long, because this three-year period cannot be interrupted or extended.

To use premium exemption, you and your employer must first complete the form on the back of the identification card and return it to the Workers' Compensation Division within 90 days of your start-work date. Once premium exemption is approved, WCD will send you a preferred worker eligibility card.



Preferred worker eligibility card

This card also is valid for three years and cannot be interrupted or extended. This card will tell you the start- and end-date of your premium exemption period. If you change employers during the premium exemption period, have your new employer follow the instructions on the back of this card.



Another name for your premium exemption period is your "eligibility period." You are eligible to use premium exemption with any number of eligible Oregon employers within that three-year period.

Wage subsidy

You and your employer must complete, sign, and send the wage subsidy

agreement to the division within 90 days of your start-work date. Upon

program approval, a wage subsidy provides a 50 percent reimbursement of your gross wages to your employer for your first 183 calendar days of work (about six months.)

Worksite modification

You can request worksite modification immediately when you start a job, but that isn't required. Sometimes workers find their jobs are

within their restrictions when they start, but new duties added later require worksite modification.

Once you start an Oregon job within your eligibility period, you have three years from

your start-work date to request worksite modification. This means that even if you start a job on your last day of eligibility, you still have three years, counting from your start-work date, to contact the Workers' Compensation Division to request worksite modification.

Save this article to refer to after you get a job. If you have questions about time frames or other aspects of the program, call the Reemployment Assistance Unit, (800) 445-3948, for clarification. Remember, there are no "dumb questions!" ■

Administrator, Workers' Compensation Division

John Shilts

Re-employment assistance

Salem office (800) 445-3948

Medford office (800) 696-7161

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Meet Jeff Griffin



Jeff Griffin is a re-employment consultant with the Reemployment Assistance Unit in Salem. He has been with the Workers' Compensation Division

since 1978. Before coming to WCD, Jeff was an injured worker who couldn't return to his regular work. There were minimal services provided to workers in his situation, and when he began working for WCD, he hoped "the system" would eventually be able to provide more services to Oregon injured workers.

Jeff has worked in the Roseburg field office, the Callaghan Center in Wilsonville, the Salem field office, the Administrative Office, the Rehabilitation Review Division, and currently works in the Benefits and Policy Services Section of WCD. While working for Rehabilitation Re-

view, he was involved with the second-injury fund, the predecessor of the Preferred Worker Program.

Jeff has provided vocational and return-to-work assistance to injured workers for more than 22 years and assisted in the creation of the Preferred Worker Program in 1990 and the Employer-at-Injury Program in 1993.

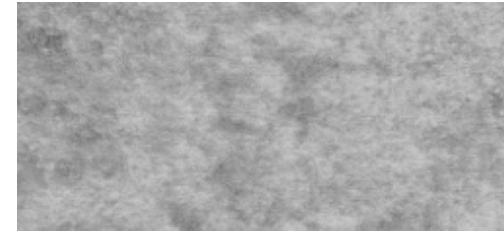
Jeff feels he has one of the best jobs in the state. As a re-employment consultant, he has traveled throughout Oregon and observed workers performing a wide range of occupations.

Jeff says, "What other job would allow me to sit with the engineer as he drives a locomotive with 18 cars of steel or learn how to make candy, yogurt, cheese, bread, and cookies by watching people at work? What other job would allow me to lean over the shoulder of a crane operator as he dumps 12 tons of molten steel or sit in the cab as a

worker operates a log loader and yarder? What other job would allow me to see parts of Oregon that most people don't know exist or meet so many wonderful people?"

Jeff lives in Salem. In his leisure time, he enjoys traveling to hot springs, hiking and fishing areas, and sightseeing spots he hears about while doing his job. One of Jeff's goals is to golf on every course in the state. He says there's nothing like having a mineral bath in Carson, Washington, playing the Beacon Rock golf course, staying in Hood River to watch the wind surfing competitions, and taking the Mt. Hood train to Odell, all in one weekend.

Jeff's e-mail address:
jeffery.l.griffin@state.or.us. ■



... Success story *continued*

retrieval activities within her lifting limitations. Because of her inability to use her lower extremities as a result of her injury, the worker used a wheelchair at work but was unable to reach the existing work surfaces. She also was unable to negotiate the narrow warehouse aisles in her wheelchair, and unable to transport herself approximately 150 yards across an asphalt surface between the office and warehouse.

The employer-at-injury expressed a firm commitment to Anne's return to work in her new position and collaborated with the Preferred Worker Program to successfully implement worksite modification. Two custom-fabricated, height-adjustable worksta-

tions were designed for use at the office and the warehouse. These allowed the worker to position herself comfortably while seated in her wheelchair as she performed her office tasks. The warehouse and associated office space were remodeled to allow the worker to access the aisles and doorways. A powered wheelchair with powered sit/stand and seat-elevation capability was provided to allow the worker access to items on shelves she was otherwise unable to reach while seated. It also transported her between the main office and warehouse.

OAR 436-110-0300 states that a modification costing more than \$25,000 may be provided for a worker with exceptional disability,

and a wage subsidy may be reimbursed at a monthly rate of 75 percent for up to one year.

The cost of this modification was approximately \$57,500 and the wage subsidy reimbursement to the employer exceeded \$30,000.

As of the date of this article, the worker remains employed in this position with this employer. Anne says that she really enjoys her new job and spends more time working in the warehouse than in the office, which suits her just fine. Anne and her employer credit the assistance from the Preferred Worker Program with making this new job possible. ■

Articulating Z-Boom Lift *by Jerry Rutherford*

Worker Disability

A 63-year-old commercial painter fractured his left ankle when the ladder he was working from slipped out from under him. As a result of the injury, the worker has permanent restrictions that include no working at unprotected heights and minimal climbing and descending. He cannot work from a ladder taller than six feet.

Work Setting

The worker paints both insides and outsides of commercial buildings. He uses paint rollers, brushes, and sprayers and performs his work — usually from ladders. Some of the extension ladders are 40 feet tall.

Obstacle

The worker cannot perform all of his job tasks because the job requires working from ladders over six feet tall.

Modification

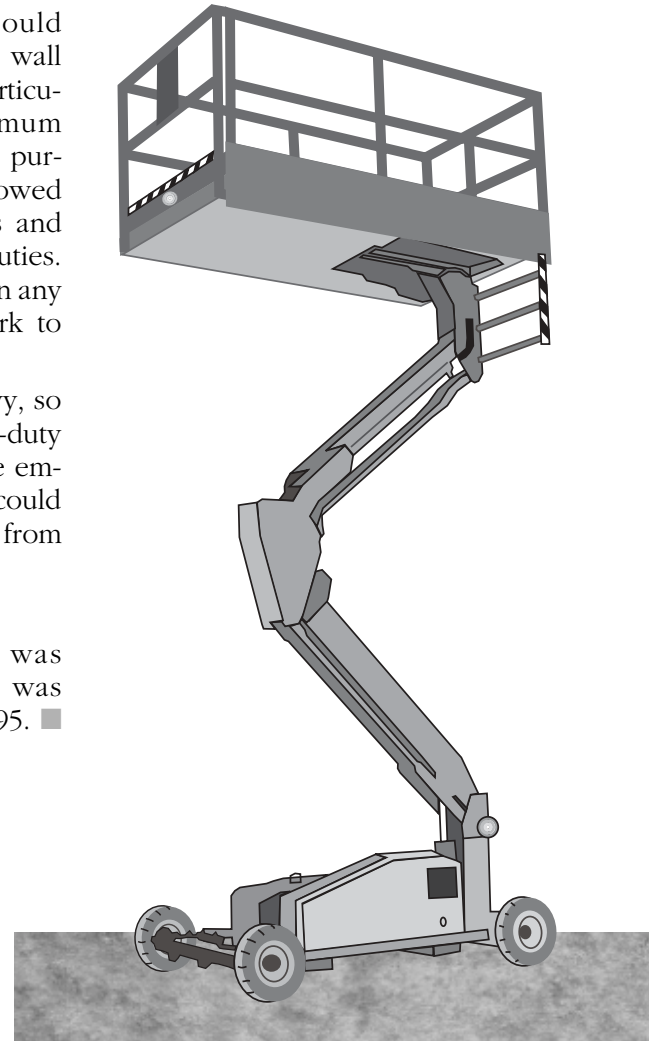
The worker's employer and the Preferred Worker Program consultant determined that a regular scissor lift

wouldn't work because it could create obstacles in front of the wall being painted. A good used articulating Z boom with a maximum platform height of 45 feet was purchased by the program. This allowed the worker to stay off ladders and perform almost all of his job duties. The employer promised to assign any work that required ladder work to others.

The Z-boom equipment is heavy, so a triple-axle trailer with heavy-duty ramps was also purchased. The employer had a one-ton truck that could pull the lift and trailer to and from job sites as needed.

Cost of Modification

The used Z-boom lift cost was \$21,000, and the trailer cost was \$2,895, for a total cost of \$23,895. ■



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