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Office location:
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213
Phone: (503) 288-3311

Web address:
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

Editor: Michael Gutwig
Associate editor: Don McIntosh
Office manager: Cheri Rice

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WHAT TO DO (AND WHAT NOT TO DO) IF YOU'RE INJURED ON THE JOB

At work, you slipped and fell, hard. Or maybe you hurt your back lifting something. Or gave yourself a nasty gash and need stitches. You're embarrassed. Maybe it was your own mistake that caused the injury. Maybe it wasn't, but your boss will think so.

With workers' compensation, none of that matters. If you were at work when the injury happened, you're covered. It doesn't matter if it was your fault, your employer's fault, or nobody's fault: State workers' compensation insurance is a "no-fault" system that exists to help you when you're injured or sickened on the job. It pays for all reasonable and necessary medical bills and related costs, and compensates you for some of your lost wages if your injury means you have to lose time at work. It can also help you get back to work with light duty if you need it, or even provide long-term benefits and retraining if the injuries are disabling.

Lost time is not a vacation. In Oregon, the benefit amounts to two-

thirds of your average weekly wage. In Washington, it ranges from 60 to 75 percent.

But you need to file a claim. It's your right to do so, and it's against the law for your employer to retaliate against you in any way for getting hurt on the job or filing a workers' comp claim. Here's what to do:

1) Notify your employer – even if you just got hired. Ideally the notification should be in writing – with as much detail as possible – and you should keep a copy. Even if you don't think the injury requires medical attention, you should notify the employer, because it might get worse later on.

2) Get first aid or medical attention. For the first visit, you can go to any emergency room or healthcare provider you choose, and tell them you were injured at work. Your employer is not allowed to choose what health care provider you see. In Oregon, the workers' comp insurer can enroll you in a managed care organization for fol-

low-up care. In Washington, follow-up visits have to be in the network.

3) File a claim, and follow up. Your employer should have the form. The medical provider you see definitely will, and can help you fill it out (except in Washington for large, self-insured employers like Safeway and Boeing, which have their own forms.) In Oregon, you need to file within 90 days; in Washington, within a year. Respond promptly to any requests for information.

4) If any part of your claim is denied, get a lawyer. Most of the time, the system works, and you're taken care of. But if part or all of your claim is denied, it can get adversarial. It can also be highly technical and complex. In Oregon you have nothing to lose by contacting a lawyer, because by law, they can't charge for working on your workers' comp case; they get paid only if you win, through a fee paid by the insurer or a share of the settlement.

GOT QUESTIONS? HELP IS AVAILABLE.

In Oregon, the **Office of the Ombudsman for Injured Workers** helps injured workers understand their rights and responsibilities, and investigates and resolves complaints they have with the workers' comp system. Visit oregon.gov/dcbs/OIW or call 1-800-927-1271.

In Washington, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, employs three full-time staff to provide you with free one-on-one counseling and individual claims assistance on your behalf. Visit **Project HELP** at projecthelpwa.com or call 1-800-255-9752.

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Please join us for our Home Ownership event on April 28th!

April 28th from 10:00 am to 12:00

Hear from Real Estate and Mortgage Professionals about the future of the Oregon housing market, new home loan programs, and what you can do to get your family into your dream home in 2018!



9955 SE Washington St.
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