



Job Ready Services

Job Ready Services, LLC

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THE AGING WORKFORCE

14% of the workforce was age 55 or older in 2002

By 2012, 19% of the work force will be at least 55

An increase of 10 million workers in that age group

Source: 2002 "Labor Force Projections to 2012: The Graying of the US Workforce" Monthly Labor Review, February 2004

The BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics) show that in 2002, those aged 25-54 made up about 76% of the work population and experienced 75% of the recordable work injuries involving days away from work.

Older workers may be relying on experience and self-made accommodations to allow them to stay productive and injury-free, according to an article in Professional Safety (June 2006) by Haight and Belwal, "Designing for an Aging Workforce." But how safe are these self-made accommodations? Sometimes an accommodation for one part of the body can put undue stress on another part of the body.

There is one area where accommodation and experience cannot overcome – healing after an injury. Older workers have an increased rate in days-away-from-work due to an occupational illness or injury. Haight & Belwal indicate that the median out of work days after an injury, for those under age 55 is 8 and for those over 55 years of age, the days out of work exceed 10.

The EEOC has set forth guidelines for employers to perform physical fitness and agility tests on their employees, such as when an employee is coming back after medical leave; when an employee requests a reasonable accommodation or when an employer observes objective evidence that the employee may not be able to perform the essential functions of their job or may pose a direct threat to health and safety of him/herself or others because of a medical condition.



Oldest Worker in U.S.—age 104

U.S. Census Bureau: By 2030, approx. 42% of the population will be over age 45.

Possible Solutions and Considerations:

- **Fit for Duty Testing:** Validate continued work capacity or determine whether employee has the ability to RTW regular duty after medical leave.
- **Ergonomic Assessment:** Determine whether accommodations need to be made or evaluate self-made accommodations for safety.
- **Functional Capacity Eval:** Determine the employee's current capabilities and whether modifications or accommodations need to be made.
- **Workplace Training:** Seminars and training programs on exercises (customized to employers' needs); injury prevention strategies and increasing employees' awareness about injury prevention.

It is important to know that employers cannot terminate an employee based on their performance of the agility or fitness testing.

The idea is to either provide appropriate accommodations or modifications; assist the employee to improve their physical fitness or place the employee in a job which is a better match for their abilities.

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