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# Onsite Return to Work: A Sikorsky Approach

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# Learning Objectives

- **Key Takeaways**
  - Determine factors that delay RTW claims
  - Discover how accurate and updated job descriptions and analysis improve RTW
  - Establish medical and workplace teams to develop RTW light-duty protocols and guidelines
  - Learn how onsite work hardening can decrease lost time days
  - Consider how developing a collaborative RTW program can make a difference with your employees/clients

# Factors that Delay RTW

- Employer unable to accommodate work restrictions
  - Physicians may not fully understand physical job requirements
  - Supervisors may not understand how to meet physical restrictions outlined by physician
- Impractical comparisons of physical therapy progress to work restrictions
- Limited details on physical demands or job descriptions
- Failure to recognize light duty/modified work opportunities

# Why Job Analyses Are Important

- **Current and up-to-date job analyses**
  - Gives RTW team and providers clear understanding of physical demands of injured workers' jobs
  - Develops appropriate and proper RTW light-duty protocols and guidelines with progression of duties
  - Facilitates a work hardening approach to RTW

# Improving Sikorsky's RTW program

- Lockheed Martin (LM) acquired Sikorsky in fall 2015
- Disability durations were significantly higher at Sikorsky than comparable Lockheed Martin business areas
  - No clear RTW program for this business unit
  - Use of medical management was minimal

# Developing the Program

- Identified most frequent injuries/surgeries (shoulder, lower and upper extremities, knee, back) and created return-to-work matrix comparing ODG with providers' protocols
- Identified providers willing to work with matrix and reduce disability duration days
- Performed over 250 job analyses
- Involved and educated all stakeholders in process
- Focused on reducing disability duration days safely and effectively

# Forming the Team

- **Various providers necessary for developing program:**
  - Medical providers
  - Sikorsky/Lockheed Martin
    - WC Administrator
    - HR
    - Safety and health leads
    - Operations
  - Case management team



# Employer Role

- Assist with the identification of modified duty tasks
- Educate employees in the RTW process and expectations
- Assist with the communication with local physicians on LM expectations for cooperation with RTW



# Employee Role

- **Employee role**
  - Be involved in RTW process from beginning
  - Work with team to secure light-duty tasks prior to surgery date
  - Sign off on light-duty tasks to be presented to the provider to keep them in the loop

# Return to Work Specialist Role

- **Return to work specialists**
  - Played key role in laying foundation of program
  - Performed over 250 job analyses
  - Worked with case managers to ensure compliance with modified duty plan

# Case Manager Role

- Ensuring compliance and consistently and continuously referring to the matrix
- Addressing provider concerns as they arise
- Establishing return-to-work specialists charged with identifying light duty tasks within injured worker's department.
- Encouraging IW sign-off on light-duty tasks and TCM-executed document to provider at next office visit

# Primary Care Provider Role

- Review job tasks provided by case manager
- Evaluate injured worker medically against physical requirements of job tasks provided
- Re-evaluate injured worker every 3 to 4 weeks for progressive movement towards full duty

# Consultant Role

- Oversee entire program for compliance with the RTW matrices
  - Physicians
    - Compliance with disability matrices
    - RTW restrictions or approval of job tasks
  - Sikorsky/Lockheed Martin
    - Identification of job tasks to meet physical restrictions

# Getting Buy-In for the Program

- Consistent messaging to employees to keep burden off doctor
- 1st success story built on the 2nd success story, etc., until it became the norm
- Weekly meetings with workers' compensation administrator to show progress



# Previous Light-Duty Efforts

- Prior to LM acquisition, Sikorsky developed Job Bank Tool Database to assist management with accommodation of modified duty releases
- Database provided an overview of physical demands of common tasks classified by department
- A link to database was sent via e-mail to management each time an employee was released to return to work with restrictions.
- Although somewhat successful, management continued to have issues finding productive work.

# Setting New Standards

- LM workers' comp team partnered with Genex vocational specialists to create 250 detailed job analyses for common factory job codes
  - More individualized and specific than job bank tool
  - Feedback from providers (who were given the analysis prior to patient appointment) was favorable
  - Analyses also reviewed with the employee/supervisor prior to MD appointment to ensure job tasks and physical demands are accurate



# What Did We Learn From the Analyses?

- Consistent follow-up with providers helps assure adherence to the RTW program and address provider issues
- Creativity matters: look outside IW's department for light-duty tasks
  - Involve HR and union representative when necessary
- Manager/supervisor involvement spurs enthusiasm in identifying new light-duty tasks

# Implementation Challenges

- Initial pushback from some managers/supervisors of new approach
- Finding right staff to be on RTW team
  - Had to show willingness to change and try something new
  - Provide constant communication about issues and challenges as they arose
  - Be persistent and dogmatic in their approach

# Putting the Process to Work

- Supervisors educated on process
- Physician followed actual restrictions to develop accommodations
- Vocational consultants trained to implement physician plan to develop modified duty tasks
- Telephonic case managers worked with employees to ensure compliance



# Program Results

- Dramatic improvement within short timeframe
- Within 6-9 months, we began to see a significant positive impact in disability duration days
- Continue process improvement of RTW program



# What We Learned

- This could be done!
- Communication was essential to the program's success
  - TCM acting as intermediary between physician and injured employee
  - Addressing problems or questions immediately resulted in better outcomes
  - Establishing new roles and empowering all members of the team led to success

# Future Implications

- **What's next?**
  - Replicate and roll out model to other business units to affect their disability duration days
  - Educate all TCM nurses beyond the disability matrix so we can expand this program companywide
  - Continue to monitor program to ensure operations continue and make improvements as we expand