

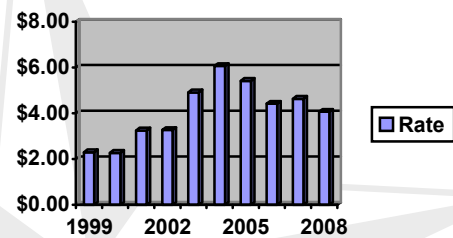
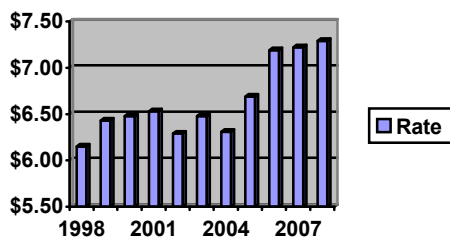
BASELINE STUDY OF ACCIDENTS/INJURIES IN THE HARVESTING AND AQUACULTURE SECTORS

The Issue

The fishery is experiencing a high rate of workplace accidents/injuries throughout Nova Scotia. In particular, the harvesting and aquaculture sectors are seeing escalating worker's compensation rates with anticipated increases within years to come.

Every extra dollar paid in Workers' Compensation premiums is a dollar less that can be invested back into the sectors

The 2008 rates posted for the harvesting sector are \$7.29 per \$100 of payroll – an increase of 16% from the 1998 rate. The aquaculture sector will see a rate of \$4.07 for the 2008 year – an increase of 43% since 1999. These rates fall considerably above the provincial assessed rate of \$2.65 per \$100 of payroll



What was Done

- Formation of an advisory committee with representatives from the harvesting and aquaculture sectors, along with the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia, NS Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and the NS Fisheries Sector Council.
- Developed a Terms of Reference and conducted a study to assess accidents/injuries in the Harvesting and Aquaculture Sectors
- Surveys were sent out to industry in July in order to capture information on their experiences with WCB, claim history, and types of accidents occurring.

Key Findings



Rates:

- There has been a progressive increase in rates for the harvesting sector. Rates have recently spiked in the past 3 years. Rates have gone from \$6.15 in 1998 to \$7.29 in 2008.
- The aquaculture sector appears to be making some improvements in its' rate but is still above the average assessed rate for Nova Scotia, and the rates associated with this sector ten years ago.
- In comparison to other provinces, the fishing industry in Nova Scotia is by far paying the highest rates among provinces in Canada.
- Demerit firms are companies paying above the average industry rate. There are 9 firms (44 firms in total) in the Aquaculture sector (20%) and 83 firms (1056 firms in total) in the Harvesting sector (8%) in a Demerit situation. It is to be noted that all firms in the industry share the costs of the claims.
- There is one Aquaculture firm in the Priority Employer Program and 4 firms that have received their first warning and will be facing a Surcharge in 2010.
- In the Aquaculture Sector, the industry rate for 2008 is \$4.07 and the highest rate paid is \$6.05.
- Of the Demerit firms in the Harvesting Sector the industry rate for 2008 is \$7.29 and the highest rate paid for 2008 is \$11.63.
- Two employers in the Harvesting sector will be the first to pay a surcharge as part of their 2008 rate. Another 9 employers in the Harvesting sector have received warnings and could potentially be paying surcharges in 2009 and 2010. 12 companies are in the Priority Employer Program

Claims:

- In terms of what drives the rates up, it is claim costs. Claim volumes are not factored in, so a single claim where an individual is off work for months or years will do more damage to a rate than 50 claims where no time is lost.
- There is a high volume of no time loss claims in relation to the total number of claims in the sectors. These no time loss claims are considered a warning, and may result in future time loss claims.
- Employers need to use whatever strategies they can to control claim costs by using tool such as accident prevention, good accident investigation, active safety committees, and using programs such as a early return to work/modified duties program.
- 38% of Aquaculture companies are reporting claims
- The amount of time that an injured worker is off work is in the range of 1-3 months.
- 39% of all injuries in the Aquaculture industry result in 3+ days of time loss. Overall, durations are shorter in Aquaculture, with no 2006 injuries exceeding 6 months of lost time.
- 13% of companies in the harvesting sector are reporting claims.
- It is to be noted that the average duration per time loss claims in Fishing (SIC 311) is over twice as long as time loss claims in the other industries. Total work time lost in 2006 for this sector is an average of 50 years. This is reflective in the industry rate.
- For the Harvesting Sector, the number of claims has been holding steady over the last 3-years, with over 40% of them being time loss claims. 20% of the total claims are major claims that are incurring \$5,000 or more in costs.
- Delays in treatment may also prolong durations as workers can become sedentary and pain from soft-tissue injuries prohibits normal daily activity
- Reducing the amount of time loss by an employee is essential in reducing costs. It is challenging to bring injured workers back to work under modified duties due to the nature of the work in the Aquaculture and Harvesting sectors.

Claims:

- Currently, there is no reporting process as to how many firms in the Aquaculture and Harvesting sectors are accessing the ERW/MD program and if they have been successful in returning employees back to work.
- The amount of time taken for an accident/injury to be assessed or treated can have a large impact on the amount of time an employee is off work. This has a direct impact on costs and in some cases the employee could have returned back to work much sooner if they received treatment in a reasonable time frame.
- Under the current reporting process, the WCBNS does not track wait times for diagnosis and treatment

Types of Injuries:

- The most frequent nature of injury in claims for 2006 is "Traumatic Injuries and Disorders" which represents injuries sustained from a single event or exposure. This is followed by "Traumatic Injuries to Muscles" (musculoskeletal or soft tissue injuries). In general, these types of injuries account for more time loss claims than non-time loss claims, however, the incidence is similar for both short-term (<3 months) and longer term (>3 months) durations. This means that musculoskeletal injuries are more likely to result in time loss (regardless of duration).
- The most common part of the body injured is the back for both sectors. Finger(s), shoulder and wrist(s) appear to be quite common as well in both fishing and aquaculture sectors. In both cases, back injuries are associated with longer claim durations.
- For aquaculture, the most frequent injury-causing event involves "Overexertion".
- For fishing, the most frequent injury-causing event involves a worker being "Struck by an Ob-

Survey Results

- For most companies, 37% of employees fall under the 16-35 year range, 43% fall under the 35-55 year range and 21% fall under the 55 and over range.
- Most companies indicated that they do not have a human resource person, or a safety committee to manage their claims.
- 85% of companies do not have an active OHS Program, 95% do not have a committee, and 91% do not have a representative. It is quite possible that companies are not familiar to the requirements under OH&S and/or due to the relative size of the operation, they have not taken the necessary steps to establishing something.
- Very few employers/safety committees have an investigative process for claims made.
- When asked if the company uses a template for doctors to complete that will indicate the employee's capabilities for modified duties, most companies reported that they do not.
- 64% of companies reported that they do follow up with the injured working as to when they would be returning back to work
- The majority of the companies (86%) noted that they do not have a back to work program to encourage the employee back to work.
- 89% indicated they there they do not have a formal process for investigating accidents/injuries.
- Programs such as First Aid/CPR, and Marine Emergency Duties have the most uptakes when it comes to training, but are also mandatory by regulatory bodies (NS Department of Environment and Labour, Transport Canada).
- Many respondents felt that the modified duties program would not apply to the fishing industry as there are no jobs that a person could do other than their normal job.
- Many programs and services offered by the WCBNS are not being utilized, and there appears to be a lack of awareness by industry on what is available.



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Recommendations

1. Implement a Prevention Strategy for the Harvesting and Aquaculture Sectors
2. Encourage an Early Return to Work/Modified Duties Program
3. Further investigation in to particular injuries – i.e. back injuries
4. WCBNS to track wait times
5. More resources dedicated to firms in a demerit situation in order to assist them in improving their safety rating
6. Better awareness around Occupational Health and Safety programs
7. Improvements in Case Management by the employers
8. Increase communication by the WCBNS in relation to the programs and services available to employers
9. Consider establishing a "Safety Association" for the Harvesting and Aquaculture sectors industry which would focus its' efforts on awareness, education and advocacy work

Next Steps

- Communicate the results to the industry
- Host strategic planning sessions around the province so that industry can determine what actions they would like to take based on the results of the study and the recommendations presented.

Upcoming Sessions:

Yarmouth- October 8,2008

Shelburne– October 9, 2008

Port Hawkesbury– October 14, 2008

Halifax– October 15, 2008



Courtesy of ESFPA

For a complete copy of the study, please contact us:
nsfsc@klis.com or 902-742-6167