

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA

Workplace Safety & The Aging Worker

Safety First in Cape Breton

May 8th, 2015

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Objectives

- Define the Aging Worker / Information
- Benefits of an Aging Worker
- Myths / Challenges of an Aging Workforce
- Creating a Safe and Healthy Working Environment for the Aging Worker
- Return to Work for the Aging Worker

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Information about the Aging Workforce

- Defined
- Remaining in the workforce longer
 - 40% plan to continue working past 65
 - Of those not, 31% would change their mind if employer allowed for work flexibility
- NS oldest workforce population in Canada
 - 50% over 45 yrs old

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Continued....

- Largest Staffing shortages in Retail, Service Sectors but also Gov't, Healthcare, Manu and Resource Industry
- Future - Not enough workers available to get work done
- Challenge: creating a safe / productive work environment that takes into account the characteristics of aging
- Need new strategies to retain older worker and keep from injury

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Group Activity

- Question 1: What are the benefits of an Aging Workforce / Worker
- Question 2: What are the Challenges of the Aging Workforce / Worker
- Question 3: What are some strategies / solutions to respond to Aging Workforce / Worker

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Benefits

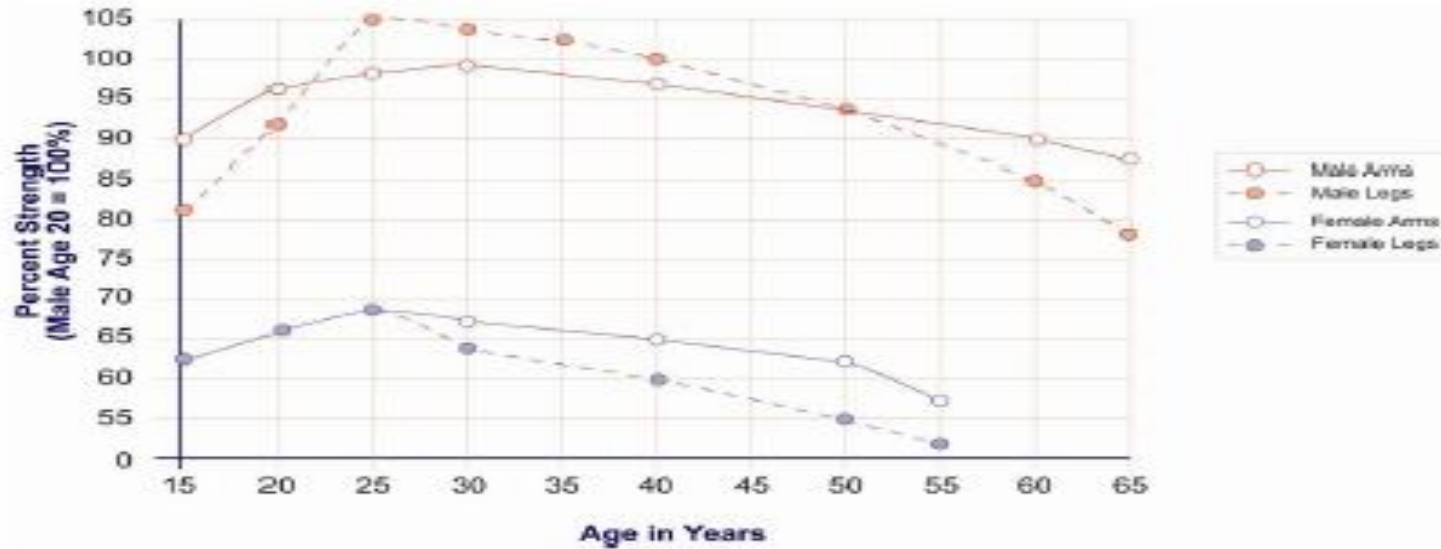
- A strong work ethic
- Reliability
- A proven performance record
- Knowledge and skills
- A sense of responsibility and duty to the job
- Loyalty and commitment to the organization
- Less likelihood of switching jobs
- An ability to manage their time
- Tactfulness
- Conscientiousness
- A co-operative and team-oriented attitude
- Self confidence
- Motivation
- More productive
- Productivity and efficiency
- Ability to work with different people
- Access to many contacts
- Realistic understanding of their abilities and shortcomings
- Willingness to work flexible schedules
- Life and invaluable work experience
- Lower absenteeism
- Wisdom
- Ability to be retrained
- Cost effectiveness
- Ability to serve as role models and mentors
- Take work more seriously
- Readily available
- Higher retention

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Challenges (Myths) of Aging Worker

- Physical:



Male and female arm and leg strength

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Challenges (Myths) of Aging Worker

- **Physiological:**
 - Fatigue occurs rapidly
 - Blood pressure increases
 - Hearing: 1/3 of 65-74 yr olds
 - Visual: all aspects deteriorate, 26% by age 60 and 20% of 19 year olds need glasses and 80% by the time you reach 60yrs
- **Suffer more illness / absent from work**
 - Less actually and > at 80YRS
- **Learning new things needs time**
 - Time / Practice
 - New Tech needs self paced and practice
- **Poor Health**
 - 75% age 65-74 very good and 66% over 75
- **Cognitive – memory / reaction**
 - Safe performance tasks unlikely b/c learn to compensate through experience (better judgment / job knowledge)
 - Response time slower
- **Less Productive – individual, but more likely at age 70 and more likely during heavy physical work**
- **Less Likely to Suffer injuries**
 - More slips trips and falls
 - Results in disability
 - Recovery is a bit longer
- **Lack of Reporting**
 - Fear of consequences so not informing of changing capabilities

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Strategies to respond to Aging Workforce

- Design workplace to fit the worker – ERGONOMICS
 - Equipment to minimize physical lifts
 - Adjust work stations to meet needs
 - Standing / sitting / walking
 - Keep things within reach – adjust heights
 - Adjust light for vision

- Hazard ID and Control



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Strategies cont....

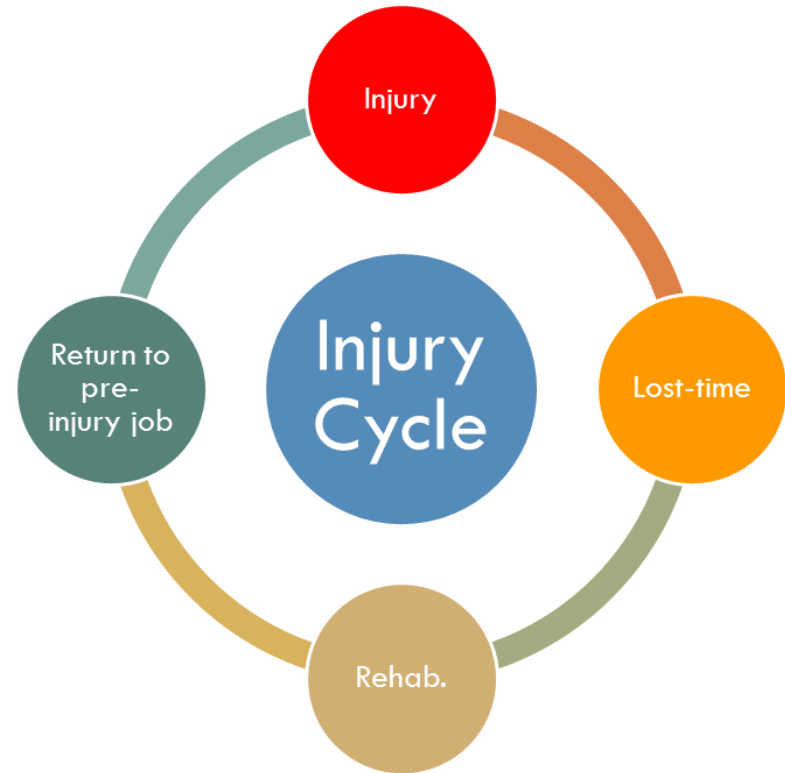
- Inclusion
 - Workplace inspections and control protocols to include a sample representation
 - Rely on expertise of workforce
 - Prevention benefits both Aging and Younger workers - ALL
- Health and Wellness Programs
 - Exercise regularly - Esp for those involved in Physical work
 - In house facilities
 - Incentives to participate in programs
- Fatigue
 - Adequate rest
 - Older workers challenged with Shift work – less disruptive in sleep
- Communication
 - Knowing how to communicate to different generations
 - Open discussions / understanding of their needs
- Training
 - Small groups / peer learning
 - Supportive friendly environment
 - Step by step or self paced
 - Age Awareness Training

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RTW and the Aging Worker

- ◆ The key to an effective return-to-work approach is to identify work-related risk factors that lead to the injury
- → **Breaking this Cycle is Essential!**



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RTW / SAW Options

- Accommodating a safe and timely Return to Work may require:
 1. **Temporary** task change (Transitional Duties) **OR**
 2. **Modification** within the current job (Job Description/Ergo Opportunity) **OR**
 3. An entirely **different job** (Suitable Work) **OR**
 4. A combination of 2 or more of these
- Communication is critical!

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Conclusion

- Aging worker has a positive impact on workplaces in NS
- Aging population does not get injured more often
- Inclusion of aging worker in workplace safety changes is crucial
- There are good strategies for responding to Characteristics of Aging
- Provide effective RTW/SAW options

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Questions????



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