

Occupational Health Group is a service offered to the business community of North Alabama by Huntsville Hospital and Decatur General Hospital Systems

How to Effectively Handle a Workplace Injury

by Eric Roth M.D., Occupational Health Group

Work-related injuries can range from the trivial to the catastrophic. OHG's goal is to treat the injured employee as quickly and efficiently as possible. The efficient handling of an employee's physical complaints caused by work can improve employee satisfaction, avoid OSHA recordable incidents, speed recovery and return to work times, as well as control direct / indirect costs related to workplace injuries.

FIRST AID

There are some on-the-job injuries that can be taken care of without consulting a medical professional. These are mainly complaints of mild discomfort or minor overuse injuries that come from a new position or a change in work responsibilities. Oftentimes a temporary slowdown in the normal pace of work, a change in the offending activity, or the use of ice and over-the-counter anti-inflammatories is all that it takes to ease symptoms and allow the employee to become conditioned to their work.

Sometimes it may take cessation of the activity past the time of symptom resolution for the employee to have completely healed. When dealing with a repetitive injury, decrease the time spent performing the offending activity or avoid it altogether for a few days or even a week or more after their symptoms are gone to ensure proper healing. If in doubt, please call us for assistance.

TIP: If a supervisor restricts an employee's work, an OSHA recordable event has NOT occurred. If things do not resolve with the simple measures listed above, evaluation by a health care provider is advised.

OHG

Most minor traumatic type injuries including contusions, sprains, strains, minor fractures, eye injuries and lacerations are what we do best. If there is difficulty in deciding whether to send an injured employee to OHG or to the Emergency Room please call us. OHG physicians are always willing to come to the phone and talk with you.

But what about those late shifts and weekends? Obviously severe traumatic injuries such as amputations, fractures and complicated lacerations will need immediate medical treatment. However, many injuries can be delayed for a short period of time until our office is open. If there is a question as to whether an injury can wait to be seen by OHG, discuss your options with the injured employee. Utilizing the Emergency Room for injuries that do not threaten life and limb risks long wait times, increased medical costs and loss of case control (e.g., prolonged work restrictions, prolonged time off and possible referral to non-designated providers).

TIP: If the injury occurs during business hours, it is often in an employer's best interest to make an expedient decision to refer them to OHG than to wait until an employee's shift ends. Early intervention facilitates prompt return to work, decreases unnecessary ER costs, and likely reduces lost work time and urine drug screen collection errors.

ER

The Emergency Room should be used when OHG is not open, or, for any serious injury. Such injuries include but are not limited to: chest pain, serious physical deformity caused by trauma, serious heat related illnesses, extensive or deep burns, electrical injuries, loss of consciousness, etc.

TIP: For most injuries requiring an Emergency Room visit, follow-up can be arranged at OHG the very next day to clarify work status.

DOCUMENTATION

Whether an injury is relatively minor and treated with first aid or serious enough to be evaluated by a health care provider, the events and circumstances surrounding the injury should be well documented, which may include completing a First Report of Injury form with the state. Accidents almost never have just one cause but are the result of chains of events and circumstances. Finding the causes of accidents calls for more than simply reviewing the injured employee's actions at the scene; the physical conditions and all equipment must be scrutinized to determine what could be done to prevent recurrences.

TIP: Conducting an accident investigation is helpful in order to learn from the experience.

First Report of Injury

by Beth Couch, Comp1One

What is the purpose of a First Report of Injury? Do I have to complete one for all on-the-job injuries? Can my employees be compensated for work related injuries if I don't complete a First Report of Injury?

These are important questions for employers and they should be clearly understood to avoid compensability issues, delayed claims processing, and fines. The First Report of Injury (FROI) is a form that is filed by an employer for occupational injuries or illnesses. The FROI provides written notice to The State of Alabama's Department of Insurance for potential workers' compensation claims. It lists demographic and wage information, and documents details of work related injuries, exposures, illnesses or deaths.

It is important to note that employers must file a First Report of Injury even if they question whether or not an event qualifies under the workers' compensation program. The FROI provides information that enables the state to evaluate the work injury or exposure. If an employer has additional information concerning a questionable claim as it relates to the first report of injury, they can submit these details on a separate form.

Employers that are required to carry workers' compensation insurance must file a FROI for accidents or illnesses that meet certain criteria. For injuries that result in more than one day's total or partial incapacity to earn wages, for occupational illnesses regardless of lost time, and for work related deaths, a FROI must be completed by the employer, the insurance carrier, or the designated third party administrator.

State guidelines mandate employers to submit the FROI within 24 hours of notification of the injury. Employers with five or more employees can be fined up to \$25,000 for failure to file a FROI within the given time period. This rule does not apply to certain businesses such as employers of domestic servants, farm laborers, and some municipal employers. Contact the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations to determine whether this law applies to your business.

It is the employer's responsibility to provide ongoing education and training to all supervisory personnel as to the importance and process of reporting accidents and work related illnesses. Employees will not receive compensation for injuries that have not been reported and/or who do not have a FROI on file with the State. Delays in reporting can also complicate timely claims processing, medical bill payments, and effective claims management.

Employers are also required to provide a written copy of the FROI to the injured employee at the time the report is made to the insurance carrier. In addition, the employer is required to furnish the injured employee with a summary of the employee's rights and responsibilities. This information must be presented in language that the employee can understand. It is also advisable to complete an internal employee accident report with details of the accident/illness to assist with valuable details as to body part, time of the accident, etc.

You will find the Employer's First Report of Injury Form, along with instructions, on the Department of Industrial Relations website at <http://dir.alabama.gov>. You will need Adobe Acrobat to complete the FROI. For questions or assistance with filing First Report of Injury, please contact Comp1One at (256) 532-2766.

Comp1One offers custom workers' compensation programs with services that include Case Management, Bill Review/Repricing, Spanish Translation, Pre-Certification and a Preferred Provider Network.



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Flu News

Influenza is one of the leading causes of absenteeism from work. Unlike the common cold, the flu can leave a person unable to function for several days - a problem that plagues many companies across north Alabama. On average, unscheduled absences cost U.S. employers \$602 for every employee annually, and according to trends, these expenses are only expected to increase in the coming years.

Looking for a solution? Through OHG's On-Site Wellness Services Department, businesses have a unique opportunity to sponsor a flu clinic tailored specifically to the needs of their employees and organization. OHG's On-Site flu vaccination Program can reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, improve workplace morale, and cut medical costs, for the employer and employee. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is reporting that U.S. businesses could save \$12 billion annually through proactive flu shot campaigns and other wellness services.

The cost per employee for on-site vaccination is:

Over 500 participants	\$25.00
301- 500 participants	\$26.00
101-300 participants	\$27.00
51 -100 participants	\$28.00
25 - 50 participants	\$30.00

If you expect less than 25 participants, you may send your employees to any of our OHG Clinics. The cost at the clinic is \$30.00 per person. We will be administering vaccinations on-site and at our clinics during October and November. To find out how to develop a program that's customized to meet your specific needs, contact OHG Wellness Services at 256-922-6699.

OHG Gets Surprise Visit from Royalty at ASIA Conference



Dayton Gowen, Marketing and Business Development Manager, and Peaches Caudle, Marketing and Customer Service Coordinator, for Occupational Health Group (OHG), were attending the Alabama Self-Insurers Association (ASIA) Summer Conference when Elvis came by and was kind enough to pose for a cameo.

The 3-Day Conference, which was held in San Destin, was attended by 700 members, guests, and exhibitors, and was ASIA's largest conference to date. ASIA is a statewide, non-profit membership organization that represents the interests of employers in Alabama who self-insure workers' compensation coverage on their employees. <http://www.asiaal.org>

OHG Welcomes New Wellness Coordinator!



OHG welcomes Charlene Learner as its new Coordinator of Wellness Services! She has over 20 years of experience in the healthcare field, several of those years in Wellness education and management with community agencies and public health. Charlene has developed and presented Wellness classes for worksites, health professionals and community groups, as well as presenting before the American Association of Diabetes Education. She is a certified Arthritis Self-Help Program Instructor, Master Trainer for Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program, as well as a nationally certified Diabetes Educator. She received her B.S.N. at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

Physician Spotlight: James F. Gauthier, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director of OHG



Dr. Gauthier received his Bachelor of Science degree in Biology at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia in 1979. His Doctorate of Medicine was received at The University of Alabama School of Medicine in Birmingham, Alabama in 1987. A residency in Family Practice was completed in 1990 at Druid City Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. After four years of private practice, Dr. Gauthier began working at Occupational Health Group in August 1994.

Dr. Gauthier received the degree of Fellow of the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP), the national medical association representing 85,000 family physicians, in October of 1997. The Degree of Fellow is conferred on Board Certified Family Physicians who have completed 50 hours of continuing medical education for six years after finishing their Family Practice residency. While working full-time at OHG, Dr. Gauthier received a Masters in Public Health (MPH) in Occupational Medicine from the Medical College of Wisconsin (1998) and completed a residency in Occupational Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia (1999).

Other qualifications held by Dr. Gauthier include: Board Certified in Occupational Medicine, Diplomat of the National Board of Medical Examiners, Diplomat of the American Board of Family Physicians, certified Medical Review Officer, and certified by the American Board of Independent Medical Examiners.

OHG Directory

Administration.....	(256) 922-6675
Marketing and Business Development.....	(256) 922-6677
Billing Department.....	(256) 922-6673
OHG - Huntsville.....	(256) 265-7000
OHG - Madison.....	(256) 774-7300
OHG - Decatur.....	(256) 353-4325
Wellness Services.....	(256) 922-6699

www.OHGonline.org

Holiday Closings

All OHG clinics will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Thanksgiving	November 22nd & 23rd
Christmas Day	December 24th & 25th



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