AUTOMOTIVE AFTERMARKET SERVICES

NEWS ALERT

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Injury Prevention

Implement an Effective Safety Incentive Program

ALTHOUGH NOT required by OSHA, some employers have shown that one of the best ways to positively motivate employees is through a safety incentive program that rewards safe behavior and participation in workplace safety efforts.

These programs need not be complicated, and some of the simplest have proven most effective. The best ones encourage safe behavior, teamwork and hazard recognition, while discouraging non-reporting of legitimate accidents or frivolous claims.

At their core, safety incentive programs offer rewards or recognition to employees or teams for meeting specific safety goals. These might include:

- Zero injuries over a period of time
- Reporting near misses
- Completing safety training
- Using personal protective equipment consistently
- Identifying and correcting safety hazards

Avoid "all or nothing" goals and ensure the prize is not the main motivator, as both are potential pitfalls that can discourage employees and promote cheating or under-reporting.

Getting started

Analyze past accident reports to understand the types of incidents that have occurred. Inspect your facility and correct all known hazards. Focus your incentive program on high-risk areas of operation.

Brainstorm with your safety team and employee representatives to develop goals that will promote increased workplace safety and measurable improvements. You'll also need to decide what kind of incentives to offer staff who meet these goals.

Program tips

- Rewards should have a direct and immediate appeal to targeted employees.
- The program should be something they enjoy and want to participate in regularly.
- Keep your staff updated on their progress, like a sign displaying the number of days since a safety incident.
- Increase the amount of the award based on milestones such as every 100 days without an incident.
- The program should be clear, concise and easy for employees to follow.
- Visual elements like safety signs or progress displays should be prominent and placed in conspicuous locations.
- Make a flexible plan that can be modified to keep it fresh and to account for changes.
- Provide recognition for jobs well done to both individuals or groups of employees.
- Maintain administrative records to avoid potential confusion and ensure fairness.

See 'Meaningful' on page 2

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As You Age, Prioritize Self-Care for Overall Well-Being

AS WE age, we may not make new friends, and our social circle may shrink over the years as friends pass away or move to another part of the country. As well, once we stop working, we may lose feelings of self-worth and connections.

But if you have the right mindset and pursue a life of self-care, this doesn't have to happen.

Here are some tips you can consider as you plot out your self-care journey:

Select pleasing, healthy activities

Activities that prioritize health and balance, such as exercise, emotional awareness, social connections and spiritual practices can go a long way to helping you feel good and healthy.

Settle on an activity that you enjoy and be clear about what brings you the most life satisfaction. If you look forward to the activity, it's much easier to get into a routine.

Prioritize relaxation

Adopting relaxation techniques can help individuals achieve better health and life satisfaction.

Many activities help people relax, including deep breathing exercises, physical exercise, meditation and involvement in your church, to name a few.

Put the emphasis on you

Set boundaries, manage stress and emphasize activities that nourish your mind, body and soul. If there are toxic influences in your life, avoid them if possible.

If birdwatching brings you peace of mind and calm, don't be ashamed to prioritize getting up at 4 in the morning to catch the rarest birds in your local area.

Keep it flexible

When considering your self-care plans, be flexible and let them evolve with your needs.

Don't get locked down into one thing, particularly if you feel that it is becoming a chore rather than a pleasure that brings you peace and happiness.

Seek out helpful tools

There are thousands of smartphone apps that can support your self-care journey. Many offer personalized guidance to improve sleep, reduce anxiety and build healthier habits.

A quick Google search can help you find the right app for your specific goals, whether it's meditation, tracking exercise, stress reduction or another area of wellness.

Begin simply

Starting small can help transform self-care into lasting, beneficial habits. Say you decide to start walking 10,000 steps a day. Don't also commit to volunteering for a charity and picking up a new hobby at the same time. Focus on one activity that brings you joy and build from there.

Also, consider easing into it by starting with 5,000 steps a day and increasing them over time until you reach your goal. You might find after reaching that milestone that you'll want to go for 12,000 steps and then longer hikes in nature.

The takeaway

As we age, self-care becomes increasingly important for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Our bodies naturally change over time, often requiring more attention to nutrition, exercise, sleep and preventive health care. ❖

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Meaningful Incentives Can Motivate Safe Employee Behavior

Successful incentives

While cash rewards are frowned upon by safety professionals, you can still have appealing rewards, such as:

- **Gift cards:** For various retailers, restaurants or online shopping sites like Amazon.
- **Bonus time off:** An outstanding employee may get a Friday or half day off.
- **Recognition awards:** Certificates, plaques or public acknowledgment of safety achievements in company newsletters or meetings.
- **Wellness rewards:** Gym memberships, spa vouchers or other health-related perks.
- **Team celebrations:** Lunches, outings or other social events that boost morale and foster camaraderie.
- **Experience-based rewards:** Tickets to sporting events, concerts or other entertainment options.
- **Personalized safety gear/tools:** High-quality safety equipment or tools customized with the employee's name or initials.
- Company swag: Items like shirts, hats or mugs with the company logo are often seen as a symbol of belonging and recognition. ❖

Cumulative Trauma Claims Driving Costs

ONE OF the largest writers of workers' compensation insurance in California recently sounded the alarm about the growth of costly cumulative trauma claims in the state.

In a recent earnings call with analysts, the insurer, Employers Holdings, highlighted the drag these claims have on its results. This came a month after the Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau noted in its recent rate filing the oversized impact of CT claims on overall workers' comp claims.

While some claims are legitimate, many are filed by workers after they are terminated, thanks to lawyers who approach them after they are laid off.

The typical claims allege gradual injuries sustained over years of repetitive motions, exposure or strain, rather than from a single accident or incident. They're common in industries involving repetitive motion, heavy lifting or prolonged exposure to harmful conditions.

California is the only state that allows cumulative stress claims in workers' compensation and one of only a few to permit claims after termination.

In 2023, CT claims accounted for 21.8% of all workers' comp claims in the state, compared to 18.5% the year prior and 15.6% in 2021, according to the Rating Bureau.

The numbers

- 40% of cumulative trauma claims in California are filed after a worker is terminated.
- 98% of cumulative trauma claims are litigated.
- Fully denied CT claims still end up costing over $10,000 on average and many remain open even after five years.

Source: Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau of California

Cumulative trauma claim characteristics

- They are more likely to involve multiple injured body parts,
- Long delays between the time of injury and when time the claim is filed, and
- Involvement of an applicant's attorney hired by the claimant.

The Rating Bureau found in a recent report that post-termination CT claims were initially less costly, but the longer they stay open, the more quickly costs accelerate.

That's compared to regular CT claims filed by workers who are still working for their employer, which start off more expensive but tend to develop more slowly over time.

The takeaway

While these claims have long been a persistent problem in Southern California, they are spreading to other parts of the state, including the Bay Area and Sacramento, Katherine Antonello, CEO of Employers Holdings, said during the company's earnings call in August 2025.

They've become such a burden on the system that California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara acknowledged the rising frequency of these claims when approving a recent workers' comp benchmark rate increase.

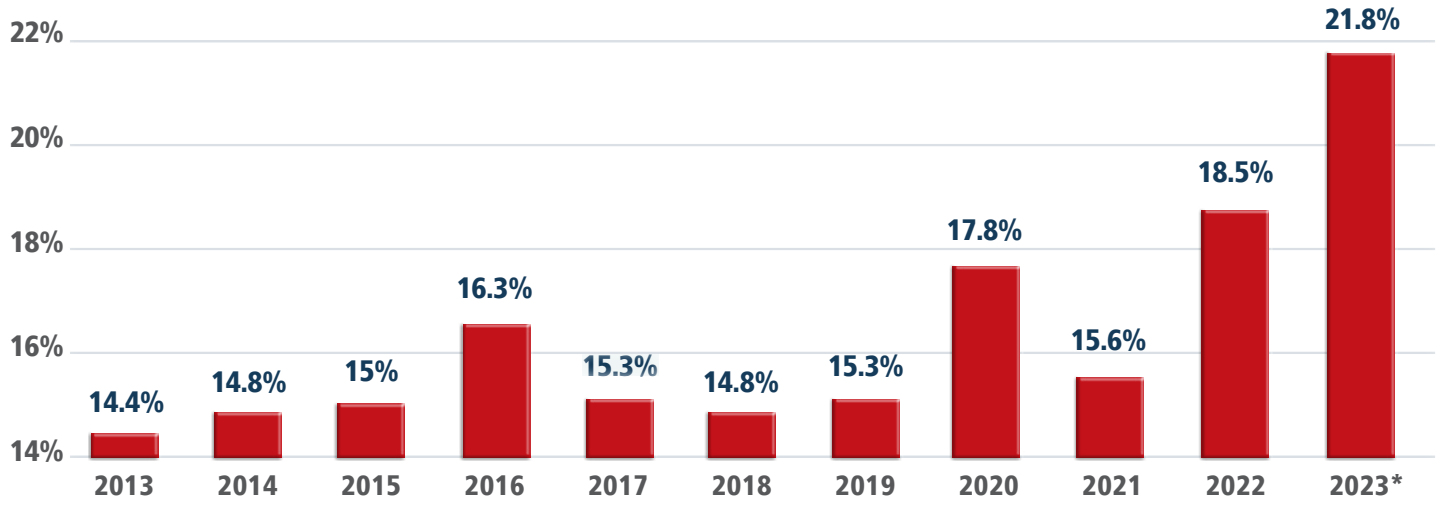
Employers should strive to reduce the risk of repetitive motion and cumulative injuries as part of good safety practice. At the same time, it's important to document all injuries and near misses.

If a CT claim is filed, employers should conduct thorough investigations, meticulously document workplace hazards and training, and assess possible links between the injury and work.

Also check with your insurer to ensure the claim was filed within the state's statute of limitations, which is one year. For post-termination claims, the clock starts on the worker's last day of employment.

For claims by active employees, the statute of limitations has not yet begun. ❖

INCREASING SHARE OF CUMULATIVE INJURY CLAIMS



Source: WCIRB

*based on preliminary data

Well-Rounded Offerings

Voluntary Benefits Are No Longer Optional

ONCE CONSIDERED optional add-ons, voluntary benefits such as accident, hospital indemnity, critical illness, group life, dental and vision insurance are increasingly becoming essential parts of a well-rounded benefits package.

Rising health insurance deductibles, higher out-of-pocket maximums and the soaring cost of care are pushing workers to look for other ways to fill the gaps. Fortunately, employers can step in to meet that need with voluntary benefits.

A shift in expectations

Prudential's "2025 Benefits and Beyond" study found that nearly a quarter of employees expect these voluntary benefits to be included as part of a modern workplace offering. But often, employers are not providing the benefits that employees say they need.

The poll found that 86% of employers say their benefits are modern, but only 59% of employees agree.

Employees' biggest concerns

- Saving for retirement (45%),
- Covering everyday expenses (44%),
- Paying for housing (29%), and
- Simply making it from paycheck to paycheck (26%).

Why voluntary benefits matter now

When a single medical event can upend financial stability, benefits that offer supplemental protection can provide an important financial backstop and save an employee from financial disaster.

Voluntary benefits provide cost-effective coverage options that protect employees from the unexpected.

For example:

- Accident, critical illness and hospital indemnity policies help offset out-of-pocket costs that major medical insurance doesn't cover, such as co-pays, deductibles, transportation, lodging and lost income during recovery.
- Dental and vision plans promote preventive care that can reduce larger medical costs over time.
- Wellness and mental health programs, another key element of today's voluntary benefits landscape, help employees manage stress and anxiety that affect productivity and retention. (In Prudential's research, 63% of employees said they have mental health concerns for themselves or a family member, yet only about the same share feels their benefits help them manage overall well-being.)

Employers and staff both win

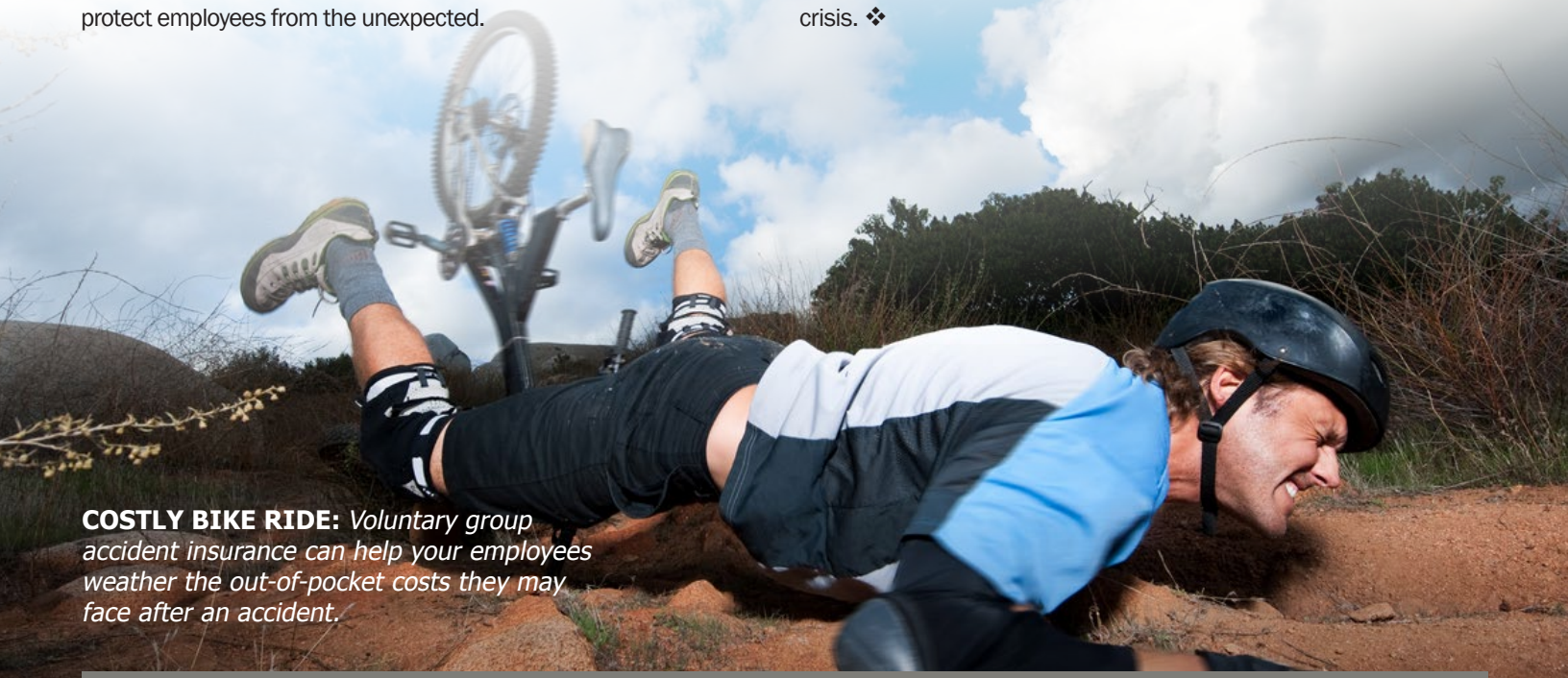
Expanding voluntary benefit offerings and ensuring you have the benefits your employees really want support recruitment and retention while containing costs.

Because these plans are typically employee-paid through payroll deduction, they add value without significantly raising the employer's benefit budget.

Employers also gain a competitive advantage in a labor market where workers expect more comprehensive protection and well-being support.

Employees gain access to affordable coverage that helps them manage risk and avoid financial hardship.

For many, paying a few extra dollars per paycheck for supplemental coverage can prevent a small setback from becoming a financial crisis. ❖



COSTLY BIKE RIDE: *Voluntary group accident insurance can help your employees weather the out-of-pocket costs they may face after an accident.*

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