

Temporary Workers at Risk

Factors Underlying Observed Injury Rate Differences between Temporary Workers and Permanent Peers

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Overview

Temporary work and other forms of non-standard work arrangements account for a growing share of jobs in the US economy. Temporary work has spread beyond its traditional base in the office and clerical sectors into higher hazard industries such as manufacturing and construction.

This study used Washington State workers' compensation claim data from 2011 to 2015. Time-loss claim rates for temporary workers were compared to those of workers in standard employment in similar occupations.

Interviews with injured temporary workers and permanent peer-workers, matched by industry, tenure, age, and gender, were conducted to explore the association of several potential risk factors with temporary employment. Interviews also characterized countermeasures such as pre-employment experience screening, general and specific safety training, supervision and task control.

Key Findings

- Temporary workers experience about twice the rate of time-loss claims per 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers compared to their permanent peer-workers.
 - The gap in claim rate between temporary workers and permanent peers is greater in high hazard sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction.
 - Analysis by work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) and non-WMSDs indicated temporary workers had higher claim rates than their peers for both categories.
- Temporary workers reported similar or lower exposures as their permanent peer-workers to a range injury hazards.
 - Exposure to musculoskeletal hazards was the highest risk faced, followed by machinery and falls.
 - Exposure to fall hazards was significantly lower for temporary workers than for permanent workers.
- Temporary workers reported being less prepared to protect themselves from hazards by such measures as experience screening, training, and task control.

Impact

This study adds to the evidence that policies are needed to improve screening and training of temporary workers, discourage job-switching, improve workers' hazard awareness and protect workers' right to refuse unsafe conditions. The responsibilities of agencies and host employers for ensuring the safety of their temporary workers need clarification.

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Research for Safe Work

The SHARP Program at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries partners with business and labor to develop sensible, effective solutions to identify and eliminate industry-wide hazards. Learn more at www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/

Find the article here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajim.22763/full>

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