

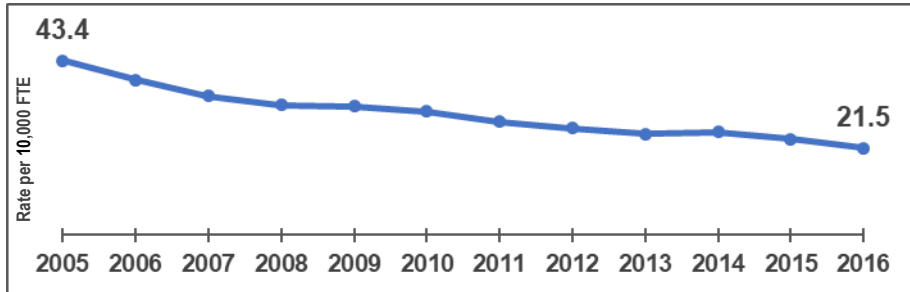


**Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) are caused by using high force, repetitive movements, awkward postures, or too much vibration on the job.**

WMSDs can be painful, debilitating, and lead to lost work time.

In Washington, 40% of compensable workers' compensation claims are for WMSDs.

## Back WMSD claim rates have decreased by half since 2005.



## Despite decline, Back WMSDs are still frequent and costly. In 2016:

- Over 15% of all claims were due to Back WMSDs.
- Back WMSD claim costs exceeded \$110 million.

## Types of work with high rates of Back WMSD claims:

- Solid Waste Collection
- Package Delivery
- Beverage Distribution
- Firefighting & Law Enforcement
- Moving & Storage
- Ambulance Service

## Three types of job activities caused over half of the claims:



**Lifting**  
**37%**



**Bending, Climbing, Crawling, Reaching, Twisting**  
**10%**



**Pushing or Pulling**  
**9%**

**WMSDs can develop over time. The intensity of a task, how long it takes, and how often it is done are important factors to consider when protecting workers from WMSDs.**

## Employers should:

- Reduce manual material handling when possible. For example, provide a cart or dolly for workers to use when handling heavy objects. Train workers how to use all equipment safely.
- Store it off the floor. The heaviest items to be lifted should be stored at mid-thigh to mid-chest height.
- Keep it close and don't twist when lifting or moving objects by hand. Make sure workers always have a secure grip, keep objects close to the body, and have feet pointed in the same direction as the lift.
- Encourage workers to report any tasks that cause pain or discomfort right away.
- Have an ergonomist or safety & health specialist evaluate demanding tasks. *L&I offers free consultations.*

- Data source: Washington State Department of Labor & Industries workers' compensation data, 2005–2016; compensable State Fund and self-insured claims included. Compensable claims involve wage replacement for lost work time (four or more days), total permanent disability, fatality, or a worker kept on salary by the employer during disability.
- Claim costs presented here are underestimates, costs and days are calculated based on what was paid as of May 2019 and are only available for State Fund claims. Costs include medical costs and wage replacement.
- FTE= full time equivalent employee. 1 FTE=2,000 hours worked in a year.