

Keeping Our Aging Workforce Safe

America's workforce is changing. There are now four distinct "generations" of workers employed in the U.S.:

- "Traditionalists": born before 1946.
- "Baby Boomers": born 1946–1964.
- "Generation Xers": born 1965–1981.
- "Millenials": born 1982–2000.

The largest group — the Baby Boomers — is now putting off retirement and working later into life (and the "Generation Xers" following them are expected to follow suit). When you look at the numbers, it is easy to see why the number of workers age 45+ is growing as a percentage of America's workforce.

Statistics across the country (and here in Colorado) show that workers over 45 years old are less likely to be injured on the job than their younger, less experienced counterparts. However, when hurt on the job, their workers' comp claims tend to be costlier — and their loss can be detrimental in other ways as well. This is because:

- Their injuries tend to be more severe and take longer to heal, meaning higher medical costs and more lost work time.
- Losing a more experienced worker to injury — particularly a supervisor or foreman — can affect operations more than the temporary loss of a younger employee.
- There is an increased possibility (depending the worker's age and the nature of the job) that the employee might never return to work.

Protecting Your Changing Workforce

Pinnacol's safety consultants can help you keep your older workers — as well as workers of all ages — safe and productive.

"As this segment of the workforce grows, employers need to reevaluate their safety programs and procedures," said Pinnacol Safety Consultant Clyde Serna. "The good news is, we can show you a number of cost-effective ways to stay ahead of this trend and keep these workers safe on the job."

These include:

- ***Adequate lighting.*** Providing increased lighting will address diminished eyesight and a slower response to changing light conditions.
- ***Noise reduction.*** To address hearing loss, we can help you find ways to reduce noise at the worksite and make sure that workers can communicate effectively.
- ***Wellness programs.*** Programs aimed at overall health issues such as proper nutrition, weight management and stress management are proven to be effective in protecting workers of all ages.
- ***Redesigning tasks.*** Evaluating lifting, squatting and other physical activities is key. Age-related changes in strength, flexibility and balance all need to be considered.
- ***Simplifying equipment.*** Modifications to machinery and/or work routines involving equipment can address many safety issues, such as age-related changes in reaction times.

Denver PDCA Workers Comp Group Members:

Let us help. For more information, contact a Pinnacol safety consultant at 303.361.4000.