

Princeton University
Work-Related Injury Management
Frequently Asked Questions for Supervisors

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Section 1: Short-Term Disability and Workers' Compensation

1. What is the difference between workers comp and short-term disability?

Workers' Compensation is a statutory benefit which provides medical care and reimbursement for lost wages to workers who experience a work-related injury, illness, disability or death on the job. Workers' comp is a no-fault system, which means an employee will be compensated for a work-related injury regardless of their role in the injury, with some exceptions (see below). Under Workers' Comp, the University pays for an employee's medical expenses, as long as the care is being managed by Employee Health. For more information on the University Workers' Comp policy, click <http://www.princeton.edu/hr/policies/leaves/3.1/3.1.11/>.

Short-term disability benefits provide wage replacement for eligible employees who are unable to work because of a medically certified illness or injury that is not work-related. Short-term disability benefits will run concurrently with any available family and medical leave, and offer full base salary replacement for up to a maximum of twelve weeks, and up to 75% replacement for an additional fourteen weeks. If, after family and medical leave has been exhausted, the employee remains absent from the workplace with a short-term disability, the University will make an effort to hold a position while the employee is receiving short-term disability benefits. For more information on the University's short-term disability benefits, click <http://www.princeton.edu/hr/policies/leaves/3.1/3.1.10/>.

2. Are all injuries or illnesses that occur in the workplace considered work-related?

No. In order for an injury to be considered work-related, it must arise out of and in the course of employment. Examples of situations which may not be considered work-related may include when an employee has a pre-existing or underlying medical condition which surfaces in the workplace, when an employee was in the workplace as a member of the general public, or when an employee has deviated from their prescribed work tasks or location.

3. Can an employee be denied workers' compensation for a work-related injury?

Yes, there are certain situations when an employee can be denied benefits for a work-related injury. These include situations of willful negligence on the part of the employee. An example of willful negligence might include an employee injured while not following established, well-documented safety rules which are uniformly enforced.

4. What departments play a role in the Workers' Compensation Program?

There are several departments that have a role in managing the University's Workers' Comp program. Primarily, the Department of Risk Management administers the program. Employee Health is responsible for all medical management of employee injuries. PMA Management Group is the University's third party administrator, which handles claims and makes compensability decisions.

Section 2: Reporting Injuries and Seeking Medical Treatment

5. What if an employee is not sure if an injury is work-related?

If an employee is not sure if an injury is work-related, supervisors should refer them to Employee Health at University Health Services for evaluation. If, after further evaluation, it is determined that the injury is not work-related, they will be referred to their own health care provider.

6. What if I don't think an employee's injury is work-related?

If you as a supervisor have reason to believe an employee's injury is not work-related or did not occur as they reported it, you are expected to report that concern, verbally if desired, to your supervisor and to Employee Health. A determination will be made about compensability after a full investigation by PMA.

7. What if an employee denies having an injury after an accident?

Sometimes incidents occur, but no injuries result. This is often referred to as a near-miss incident. In addition, injuries may not be immediately apparent. If an employee reports an incident or is seen involved in an incident, but denies being injured, supervisors should use the incident information reporting form to gather and record important information about the incident. Employees are not obligated to report to Employee Health if they were not injured.

8. What is my responsibility if an employee does not wish to report to Employee Health?

Whenever an employee reports a work-related injury to you, they must report it to Employee Health. No injury is too minor. If they prefer not to be treated at Employee Health, the practitioners can advise them regarding medical treatment. Under NJ Workers' Compensation law, an employee cannot elect to see their own provider without prior approval from Employee Health. If they choose to see their own provider, they risk not having their bills covered.

9. What happens if an injury occurs after Employee Health is closed or on weekends?

Employee Health is open from 8 am to 4 pm Monday through Friday. If an injury occurs after hours or on weekends, or any other time Employee Health is not available, the employee should be told to report to EH the next business day. If there is an urgent matter, they may be offered treatment in the emergency room and then must report to EH the next business day. They should bring any paperwork they receive at the ER with them when seen at EH.

10. When should I call Public Safety?

Call Public Safety at 911 from any campus phone and 609-258-3333 from any cell phone if there is an emergency. They will respond and evaluate the situation. If necessary, Public Safety will dispatch an ambulance.

11. Who should transport an injured employee?

In non-emergency situations, supervisors or coworkers may transport an employee to Employee Health for medical treatment. However, certain injuries or illnesses can develop into emergency situations during transport; supervisors should err on the side of caution and contact Public Safety if there is the potential for situations to deteriorate.

In an emergency situation, only Public Safety or an ambulance should transport the employee.

12. If an employee is treated at the hospital, do I still need to contact Employee Health?

Yes, Employee Health should be notified as soon as possible but no later than the next business day that an employee was treated at the hospital for a work-related injury. Employees will need to make an appointment to be seen and bring any paperwork they received at the ER. Regardless of the ER discharge instructions, only EH can authorize time out of the workplace or return to work.

13. What information about the incident should I be collecting?

Supervisors should complete a Princeton University Injury Report Form when an employee reports a work-related injury. See details of the form [here](#). The form is attached to this document.

14. Is there any injury that is so minor that they don't need to report to Employee Health?

No. No injury is too minor to report to Employee Health. While it is recognized that not all injuries need medical attention, reporting to Employee Health ensures prompt medical evaluation, compliance with University reporting procedures and accurate injury reporting to the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (EHS). EHS investigates most work-related injuries to identify causes and corrective actions to prevent similar injuries.

Section 3: Communication and Follow-Up

15. How will I be notified if an employee will be put out of work? How will I be kept informed as the case progresses?

When an employee is seen in Employee Health for a work-related injury, the medical provider (nurse practitioner or physician) will generate a form that indicates the next appointment the employee has with them, the restrictions indicated and whether they are released to work or should go home. This form is emailed immediately to the supervisor. When a healthcare provider in EH decides that restrictions are indicated, they will attempt to contact appropriate managers to explore the possibility of returning the employee to work with temporary restrictions.

16. What happens if an employee is put out of work by the medical personnel at the emergency room?

Even if an employee is put out of work by an emergency room physician, he/she must contact Employee Health for approval. Only Employee Health can authorize time out of the workplace for a work-related injury.

17. What if an employee calls out after being returned to work?

If an employee calls out after being returned to work, a supervisor should inquire as to the nature of the call out. If an employee indicates that they are calling out because of a work-related injury, they should be directed to contact Employee Health at 8-5035. Days out that are not approved by Employee Health may be charged to an employee's paid time off.

18. What do I do if an employee contacts me directly about returning to work?

Only Employee Health can authorize a return to the workplace. Supervisors should refer employees to Employee Health for a return to work discussion. Supervisors should not make any agreements with employees about their return to work.

19. When can I anticipate the employee will return to work? How do I plan?

Each individual's medical progress is different and it can be difficult for a health care provider to predict exactly when an employee will be able to return to work. When Employee Health decides on an employee's ability to return to work, they look at the job they need to perform and the type of injury, how they are responding to treatment and other factors such as pain, functional capacity and endurance. The decision is also influenced by the input of the medical consultants and specialists who are treating the employee.

Supervisors should call Employee Health to inquire about the progress of an individual employee in order to get an idea of when they are anticipated to return.

20. How is EHS's investigation report different than the initial form I filled out?

The initial incident information form completed by the supervisor is intended to help supervisors gather and record vital information as soon after the incident as possible. While EHS attempts to investigate all injuries as soon as possible, they may not be able to complete an investigation until several days after the incident.

The primary focus of the EHS investigation is to identify factors that may have contributed to the incident and formulate corrective actions to prevent similar injuries in the future.

Section 4: Time Collection and Financial Questions

21. Why are employees charged paid time off for the first seven days of absence for a work-related injury?

Under the New Jersey workers' compensation statute, employees are compensated for absences due to work-related injuries or illnesses only after the time lost from the workplace is more than seven calendar days. This is the seven calendar day waiting period and is applicable to any one injury or illness.

The seven calendar day waiting period does not need to follow the accident immediately or be consecutive.

If an employee is out for less than seven calendar days for a work-related injury, they will be charged paid time off. If an absence exceeds seven calendar days, employees are "refunded" their paid time off.

22. How do I charge time off pending a decision about an injury that is potentially work-related?

Occasionally, it may take several days before a decision is made about the compensability of an injury. If an employee is out of work during this time, they will be charged sick or bundle time until such time as a decision is made. If the injury is determined to be work-related and the absence is greater than seven calendar days, the time will be charged to workers' comp and the employee will be "refunded" their paid time off.

23. What if an employee doesn't have paid time off to cover the seven day absence?

If an employee does not have paid time off, the time out of the workplace during the initial 7 day absence would be classified as leave without pay.

24. Should an employee be required to punch out to go to Employee Health?

Employees may be required to punch out whenever they leave their building in accordance with departmental policy. However, employees will be paid for time spent at EH for a work-related injury.

25. Are employees permitted to schedule physical therapy/specialist appointments for work-related injuries during work hours?

Employees are permitted to schedule physical therapy/specialist appointments for work-related injuries during work hours with some considerations, such as scheduling during off-peak times. Employees and their supervisors should discuss physical therapy appointments to ensure they don't conflict with peak times. Appointments scheduled for employees on alternate work schedules or days off are not overtime eligible.

Physical therapy is typically scheduled for three sessions per week for up to 1 - 1.5 hours per session. Supervisors who have concerns about the amount of time an employee is taking to go to physical therapy should discuss their concerns with Employee Health or their manager.

26. Are employees paid to attend physical therapy sessions for work-related injuries during the day?

Yes, employees are paid regular time while attending physical therapy sessions on campus during the day for a work-related injury.

27. If an employee is treated at the hospital, how do bills get paid?

To ensure work-related medical expenses are paid in a timely manner, Employee Health should be notified as soon as possible but no later than the next business day after an employee is treated at the hospital for a

work-related injury. Employees will need to make an appointment to be seen and bring any paperwork they received at the ER. As a reminder, only Employee Health can authorize time out of the workplace or return to work, regardless of the ER discharge instructions.

Section 5: Transitional Work and Restrictions

28. What is my responsibility to enforce employee restrictions? And what do I do if an employee is not complying with their restrictions?

If an employee is returned to work with restrictions, it is both the employee's and the supervisor's responsibility to ensure an employee works within those parameters. Supervisors should not assign an employee to job tasks that exceed the restrictions. If an employee is not complying with their restrictions, the supervisor should contact their senior management and/or Human Resources to determine the best manner to address the situation.

29. Can I schedule an employee for overtime if they are working with restrictions?

Each injury is evaluated and managed on a case-by-case basis. Generally, employees who are working with restrictions should not be scheduled for overtime work as this may exacerbate the injury and delay an employee's return to full duty.

30. How long can I reasonably expect an employee will be on transitional duty?

Transitional work (or work with EH-approved restrictions) is meant to allow the employee to gradually transition back to performing all the essential functions of their job – it is meant to be short-term and should not last more than several months. Of course, each injury is different and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Employee Health, in collaboration with outside treating/consulting physicians, will define the end date. Managers should bring concerns about an employee's period of restriction to Employee Health.

31. What is a FCE and when is it used?

A functional capacity examination is done by an outside consultant, typically, a physical therapist, and is used to clarify what ability the employee has to perform the essential physical requirements of a particular position. It measures flexibility, endurance and conditioning. It helps to demonstrate comprehensively and clearly what activities the employee can safely perform. The test takes about 3-4 hours and is only performed when the treating physician indicates that it is safe for that individual to perform and that the employee is ready to return to full duty.

The FCE is generally utilized with employees who have been out of work for substantial periods of time- 3 months or more- and are in physically demanding jobs.

32. What is work hardening?

Work hardening is a "job specific" program of activity with the goal of returning employees to work. The program, done by a physical therapist, uses real or simulated work tasks and conditioning exercises to provide a transition to normal functioning at work. It helps to build strength and endurance. Each session takes at least two hours.

33. What is a permanent accommodation and when is it used?

If an employee requests an accommodation for a disability, the employer has a responsibility to enter into an interactive discussion to determine what the specific requests are and whether the accommodation can reasonably be made. As a supervisor, you should contact Human Resources immediately and work with them to request and evaluate information, which the employee provides to Employee Health. Do not

request information about the medical condition from the employee, but it may be helpful to let them know that HR and Employee Health will assist with the process.

Section 6: Long Term Disability (LTD)

34. What is Long Term Disability?

Long term disability is a wage replacement benefit program which provides financial protection by paying a portion of income due to an extended period of disability. The Office of Human Resources administers the Long Term Disability Plan. Long term disability benefits usually begin after an employee has been disabled for more than 26 weeks.

35. How long will an employee's job be held?

In general, the University will hold a position for up to 26 weeks for a regular benefits-eligible employee who is absent from the workplace because of a work-related injury or illness. On a case-by-case basis, employees who have a prolonged absence due to a work related injury may be replaced prior to the expiration of the 26 week period if: (1) medical prognosis, by an authorizing health care provider, documents that the employee's condition will not improve sufficiently within the 26 week period to allow the person to return to work and be able to assume the essential duties of the position, or (2) it can be clearly demonstrated that the continuing absence seriously interferes with the effective operation of the workplace. Prior to making this decision, the employee's supervisor would discuss the matter with the Office of Human Resources.

If a decision were made not to hold the position, that decision would not impact eligibility for long-term disability (LTD) benefits as long as the employee continued to meet the requirements of eligibility. Employees approved for LTD are permitted to retain the status of a University employee in inactive status, so that the employee may continue to receive health benefits, and the University continues to make pension contributions.

36. Can an employee come back to work after they've been on Long Term Disability?

The University is not obligated to hold an employee's position after the expiration of the 26 week period. In the event an employee is no longer eligible for receipt of long term disability benefits as a result of receiving full medical clearance, the employee may re-apply for any open and available position within the University to which the employee is qualified. An employee will not be automatically returned to any available position within the University, even if the employee's original position has not been filled during the period of time that the employee has been on long term disability. If an employee is interested in returning to work at the University upon medical clearance, he or she should contact the Office of Human Resources to discuss available options.

Section 7: Other Questions

37. What is my responsibility if I have an employee that has been injured multiple times?

There may be many reasons that an employee may report multiple injuries. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to raise concerns over an employee's injury history to senior management and the Office of Human Resources if necessary.

38. What do I do if I know an employee has another job?

If you know that an employee has another job outside of Princeton, it should be reported to your manager, Employee Health or Risk Management.

39. Does the University investigate fraudulent cases?

Yes. It is the manager's responsibility to bring those items to the attention of Risk Management and/or Human Resources. However, due to the confidential nature of these investigations, the University may not be able to share results with supervisors.

Princeton University Accident/Near Miss Investigation Form
 (Please read both sides of this form completely prior to beginning the investigation)

I. Background Information on Injured Person (if any)

Name			
Department		Job Title	
Campus Address		Phone/Ext.	
Supervisor		Phone/Ext.	

II. Witnesses (if any)

Name	Address & Phone/Ext.

III. Description of Accident/Near Miss (Describe sequence of events, including time, date, & location of incident. Attach any photos, drawings, or separate page if necessary.)

Description of Injury

IV. Factors (Describe conditions or practices, if any, that may have led to the occurrence of this incident. Attach separate page if necessary.)

V. Corrective Actions (In your opinion, what are reasonable actions or steps that could be taken to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of a recurrence. Attach separate page if necessary.)

Investigation Completed By (Signature) _____

_____ Date

Department Head comments:

Department Head/Safety Manager Signature _____

_____ Date

Instructions for Completing this Form

Accident/Near Miss Investigation Policy

All accidents/near misses must be investigated. The supervisor of the employee involved in the accident/near miss is responsible for conducting the investigation and, when appropriate, ensuring that corrective actions are taken. The depth and complexity of the investigation will vary with the circumstances and seriousness of the incident. A thorough investigation may identify previously overlooked physical, environmental, or process hazards, the need for new or more extensive safety training, or unsafe work practices. Investigators must maintain objectivity throughout the investigation. The purpose of the investigation is to uncover any factors that may have lead to the accident, not to assign blame.

The investigator should complete sections I – V, sign and date the form, and then forward the form to the department head for review and approval. Once complete, a copy of the form must be sent to Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at 262 Alexander Street. Additional guidance in performing an accident investigation is available in Section A2 of the Princeton University Health and Safety Guide, or by contacting EHS at extension 8-5294.

I. Background Information on Injured Person (if any): This form must be used only for accidents/near misses involving Princeton University faculty, students, or staff. Accidents involving outside contractors or campus visitors must be reported to Public Safety immediately.

II. Witnesses: Self-explanatory

III. Description of Accident: Most accidents result from an accumulation of events. An accurate, factual description of the accident and the events leading up to it can be very helpful. This chronological sequence can be studied to determine how each event may have contributed to the accident. Include photos or drawings of the accident site, if these will be useful to the investigation.

IV. Factors: Factors, if any, are the conditions in the workplace or actions that contributed to the occurrence of this accident. Examples might include unguarded machinery, broken tools, slippery floors, not following established procedures, or insufficient training or maintenance.

V. Corrective Actions: List actions or steps that could be taken to control or eliminate the likelihood of a recurrence. Include not only those that can be accomplished right away (e.g., providing personal protective equipment, installing a machine guard), but also actions such as changes in policy or providing additional training.