



EXTENT & COST OF INJURIES FROM PERFORMING HAZARDOUS MANUAL TASKS IN THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MINING INDUSTRY

All industry stakeholders benefit from the implementation of strategies that reduce the extent and severity of musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks in WA mining workplaces.

Manual tasks are recognised as a major occupational safety and health risk for the mining industry. Injuries from performing hazardous manual tasks, collectively referred to as musculoskeletal disorders, accounted for about one-third of all injuries in WA mining workplaces over the three-year period from July 2004 to June 2007 (Fig. 1).

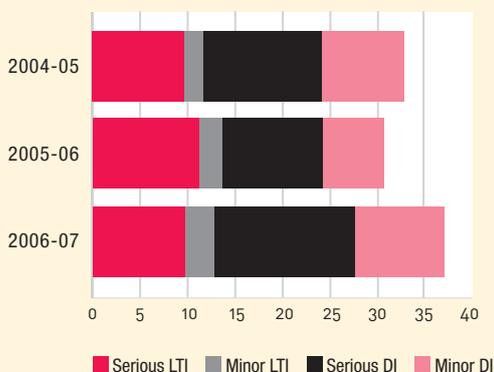


Figure 1: Percentage of WA mining workplace injuries for July 2004 to June 2007 that were musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks

Figure 1 has also been categorised into serious and minor injuries. Not only are musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks a leading cause of injury, but about two-thirds are serious, resulting in injured employees being unable to perform their ordinary occupation (i.e. either off work or on alternative or light duties) for 14 or more days.

The direct and indirect costs associated with these injuries are considerable. Between July 2004 and June 2006, compensation for musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks in the WA mining industry resulted in 643 lost time claims and 1,064 no lost time claims. This represents 38.5 per cent of all lost time compensation claims and 30 per cent of all no lost time compensation claims. 'No lost time compensation' relates to payments for treatments, including medical costs, occupational therapy or physiotherapy.

The total cost of lost time claims from these injuries in this two-year period was \$23.9million (37% of total lost time claims cost) and for no lost time claims was \$1.8million (30% of total no lost time claims cost). The average cost of a claim for musculoskeletal disorders from performing hazardous manual tasks was \$36,891 per lost time claim and \$1,719 per no lost time claim.

According to WorkCover WA, 96,763 days were lost in the two-year period as a result of musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks, representing 45 per cent of the total days lost from mining workplace injuries.

In addition to the direct cost of compensation claims, these injuries incur costs such as lost productivity, staff replacement and training costs, loss of expertise and administrative overheads. The cost to the injured worker includes pain and stress, loss of income and possible long term disability.

The compensation and other costs of musculoskeletal disorders from performing manual tasks are a major contributor to total injury costs in the WA mining industry. Clearly, reducing the extent and severity of such injuries would be of considerable cost benefit to all stakeholders.

Data sources

Injury data for 2004-05 to 2006-07 sourced from AXTAT database, Resources Safety, Department of Consumer and Employment Protection. Compensation costs obtained from WorkCover Western Australia.

Lost time injury (LTI) - work injury that results in an absence from work of at least one full day or shift any time after the day or shift on which the injury occurred

Disabling injury (DI) - work injury (not lost time injury) that results in injured person being unable to fully perform his or her ordinary occupation (regular job) any time after the day or shift on which the injury occurred, regardless of whether or not the person is rostered to work, and where either alternative or light duties are performed

Serious LTI - lost time injury that results in injured person being disabled (unable to perform his or her ordinary occupation) for a period of two weeks or more and absent from work for at least one day

Serious DI - injury that does not result in any lost time but injured person is disabled for a period of two weeks or more

Minor LTI - lost time injury that results in injured person being disabled for a period of less than two weeks and absent from work for at least one day

Minor DI - injury that does not result in any lost time but injured person is disabled for a period of less than two weeks

Days off - total calendar days, whether rostered or not, absent from work or on alternative duties, restricted duties or restricted hours due to work injury

