

*Work to live.*

## SOLUTIONS FOR AN AGING WORKFORCE

### What is an older worker?

Statistically, an older worker is a worker over the age of 45.

### Why do older workers stay or return to the workplace?

Saskatchewan's employers may host older workers for many reasons:

- Economic necessity;
- No mandatory retirement age;
- Better long-term health and increased life expectancy means people remain in the workforce longer than in previous generations;
- Uncertain economic climate may force people to work later in life;
- The employer may need the expertise or maturity of an older worker;
- A limited labour pool attracts retired and semi-retired people back into the workforce.

### Are older workers different than other workers?

Older workers may have physical or mental changes that put them at an increased risk for injuries. For example, as people age their eyesight or hearing may diminish, they may have reduced mobility, or their reaction times may decrease. They can be more prone to fatigue and to repetitive strain injuries as bone density and muscle mass decline.

### Are older workers more likely to have work-related injuries?

No. The statistics from WCB do not reflect this. In fact, older workers suffer fewer injuries. Unfortunately, when they do have an injury, the injuries tend to be more serious, and older workers take longer to recover, especially when compared to very young workers.

Older workers are less likely to engage in risk-taking behavior, and they score higher on job skills, loyalty and reliability. Older workers also tend to have low absenteeism and low job turnover.

### How can employers reduce the risk factor for older workers?

Prevention is key. Each workplace and each older worker is different.

Employers can reduce the risk of injury by looking at the worker's tasks and using good [ergonomic](#) principles of assessment and follow up. Some older workers may prefer a flexible work schedule that includes part-time or job sharing.

Some of the things an employer may install to assist older workers – ergonomic assessment, a stretching program, larger print documents, anti-fatigue matting, flexible hours, task rotation - will benefit all workers.

### Is there anything else an employer can do?

When a person is physically unfit, it can affect life on and off the job. People who are unfit also have more sick days and more work injuries.. Research shows that stretching prevents injuries and increases productivity in workers of all ages. Adding a stretching program to the workplace is a cost-effective way to prevent injuries.

### What happens when the worker retires?

When a person leaves a company, the employer can lose decades of experience and information, including notes, reports, and the worker's knowledge. Employers should develop a succession plan that includes the best way to identify impending retirements, plan for upcoming hiring and training, and capture that knowledge before the retirement takes place.