

Review of Worker's Compensation Injuries
UW-River Falls
2007-2009



Connie Smith
Risk Management
3/1/2010

Introduction

An analysis of a three year history of worker's compensation injuries (2007-2009) was performed in order to identify trends and provide the foundation for drafting strategies to reduce worker injuries on campus. Based on the data, seven different reporting categories were defined:

- Administration/Faculty/Office Staff
- Athletics
- Division of Technology Services
- Facilities
- Lab Farms
- Student Affairs
- University Police

The total number of claims for the period was 112 at a cost of \$130,604.
The annual breakdown is as follows:

- 2007 – 38 claims (\$54,130)
- 2008 – 42 claims (\$41,758)
- 2009 – 32 claims (\$34,716)

\$19,414 decrease
(Cumulative amount over
the three years)

(Note: There are still open claims in each of these years so dollar amounts may change slightly over time.)

UW-River Falls pays worker's compensation premiums to the UW System each year to help fund the over \$4.5 million budget for worker's compensation insurance. Because premiums are based on injury experience, the UW-River Falls contribution has been decreasing during the past few years in alignment with our injury experience.

- 2007 - \$167,108
- 2008 - \$151,197
- 2009 - \$137,047
- 2010 - \$124,660

\$42,448 decrease
(Cumulative amount over
the three years)

Incident rates are an indication of how many injury incidents have occurred, or how severe they were. They are measurements *only* of past performance or lagging indicators. The most common rate used is the Recordable Incident Rate. This is commonly called either the "total case incident rate" or just the "incident rate". An OSHA recordable injury is an occupational injury or illness that requires medical treatment more than simple first aid and must be reported on the OSHA 300 log, the required form for recording work-related injuries or illnesses. The formula for calculating the incident rate is:

$$\frac{\text{\# of OSHA recordable injuries}}{\text{Total Hours Worked per Calendar Year}} \times 200,000 = \text{Incidence Rate}$$

(200,000 hours are the hours worked by 100 employees, averaging 40 hours per week over a 50 week span - two weeks taken away for holidays.)

The newest type of incident rate is called DART (Days Away/Restricted or Transfer Rate). DART is a mathematical calculation that describes the number of recordable injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time employees that resulted in days away from work, restricted work activity and/or job transfer that a company has experienced in a year. This number is also based on trending over 200,000 hours but it's not based on total injuries. It's based only on those injuries and illnesses severe enough to warrant "Days Away, Restrictions and Transfers".

Incidence rates take on more meaning for an employer when the injury and illness experience is compared with that of other employers doing similar work with workforces of similar size. The National Incidence Rate at colleges and universities was 2.6 in 2007 and 2.4 in 2008. The National DART Rate at colleges and universities has been at 1.0 for 2007 and 2008. The 2009 colleges and universities rates for both categories are pending and will be available more towards mid-year 2010 once national data is gathered. The UW system numbers are also included here for comparison.

Incidence Rate for UWRF:

2007 – 21 recordable injuries = 2.64 /3.2 (UW system) /2.6 (national)

2008 – 17 recordable injuries = 2.07 /2.5 (UW system) /2.4 (national)

2009 – 12 recordable injuries = 1.44 / 2.3 (UW system)

DART Incidence Rate for UWRF:

- 2007 – 6 claims with DART = 0.76/ 0.62 (UW system) /1.0 (national)

- 2008 – 5 claims with DART = 0.61/ 0.62 (UW system) /1.0 (national)

- 2009 – 6 claims with DART = 0.72 /0.65 (UW system)

(It is always good when UWRF values are less than the system and national values as that means our injury experience is less than our counterparts.)

While looking at claims and reviewing injuries that have already occurred is an important component of building injury reduction strategies, the more critical area of focus is on preventing those injuries in the first place. Risk Assessments, Workstation Design Analysis, Essential Job Function details, and New Employee Screening are just some of the prevention programs implemented at UWRF. An effective Early Return to Work Program helps to lower insurance costs, retain skilled workers, and improve employee relations. This report will highlight only one aspect of a comprehensive system that uses a variety of risk management strategies to maintain a safe and healthy workplace for employees.

Administration/Faculty/Office Staff

The most prevalent cause of injury for this group was due to slips, trips, and falls. Slips, trips, and falls are the most prevalent injury type for the entire UW-System.

Total Number of Claims – 32 (\$27,748)

2007 - 12 Claims (\$16,040)
2008 - 15 Claims (\$10,176)
2009 - 5 Claims (\$ 1,532)

Athletics

Total Number of Claims – 3 (\$1,520)

2007 - 1 Claim (\$ 714)
2008 - 1 Claim (\$ 181)
2009 - 1 Claim (\$ 625)

Division of Technology Services

The one claim for the past three years with a cost for this department was related to a vapor exposure to the eye from a leaking computer battery.

Total Number of Claims – 3 (\$299)

2007 - 1 Claim (\$ 0)
2008 - 2 Claims (\$ 0)
2009 - 1 Claim (\$299)

Facilities

The Facilities Department had 30% of the claims but about 57% of total claims costs for the campus. It is understandable that the injuries would be more severe given the nature of their work. It is important to note that two employees had shoulder injuries requiring surgery and extensive physical therapy. If the cost of these two injuries is taken out of the total dollar amount for the three year period, the remaining amount would be about \$19,000. The majority of the remaining injuries were due to fall related events.

Total Number of Claims – 35 (\$74,136)

2007 - 13 Claims (\$ 27,285)
2008 - 11 Claims (\$ 20,360)
2009 - 11 Claim (\$26,491)

A further breakdown for this department can be calculated:

Custodial Group: 13 Claims (\$23,196)
Grounds Crew: 4 Claims (\$ 740)
Maintenance: 18 Claims (\$50,200) (includes technicians and crafts)

Lab Farms

Agriculture ranks among the most hazardous industries in our nation. UWRP injuries are related to equipment handling and animal handling. In 2008, an \$8,000 grant was received from State Risk Management to create learning modules for farm related safety topics. Eight modules were created and farm employees (including student workers) participated in the training sessions. Further work is being done during the summer of 2010 to refine/update the curriculum so it remains current. The goal is to have the modules available on D2L so employees and students can complete them online.

Total Number of Claims – 13 (\$10,882)

2007 - 4 Claims (\$ 6,093)

2008 - 4 Claims (\$ 1,226)

2009 - 5 Claims (\$ 3,563)

Student Affairs

The majority of injuries in Student Affairs are due to strains, sprains, and low back issues related to moving equipment and furniture for set up and tear down during events.

In 2007 there was a large claim due to a carbon monoxide inhalation hazard from the ice edger exhaust at the Hunt Arena. The ice edger was replaced (with matching funds from system Risk Management) thereby eliminating this exposure for the future.

The largest dollar amount claim for this group was from 2008 for a back injury sustained during equipment tear down for event.

Total Number of Claims – 13 (\$15,435)

2007 - 6 Claims (\$ 3,601)

2008 - 8 Claims (\$ 9,628)

2009 - 6 Claims (\$ 2,206)

University Police

Both of the claims were related to slipping on the ice while performing parking related duties. The claims were reported but there was no follow up medical treatment required. Hence, the zero dollar amounts.

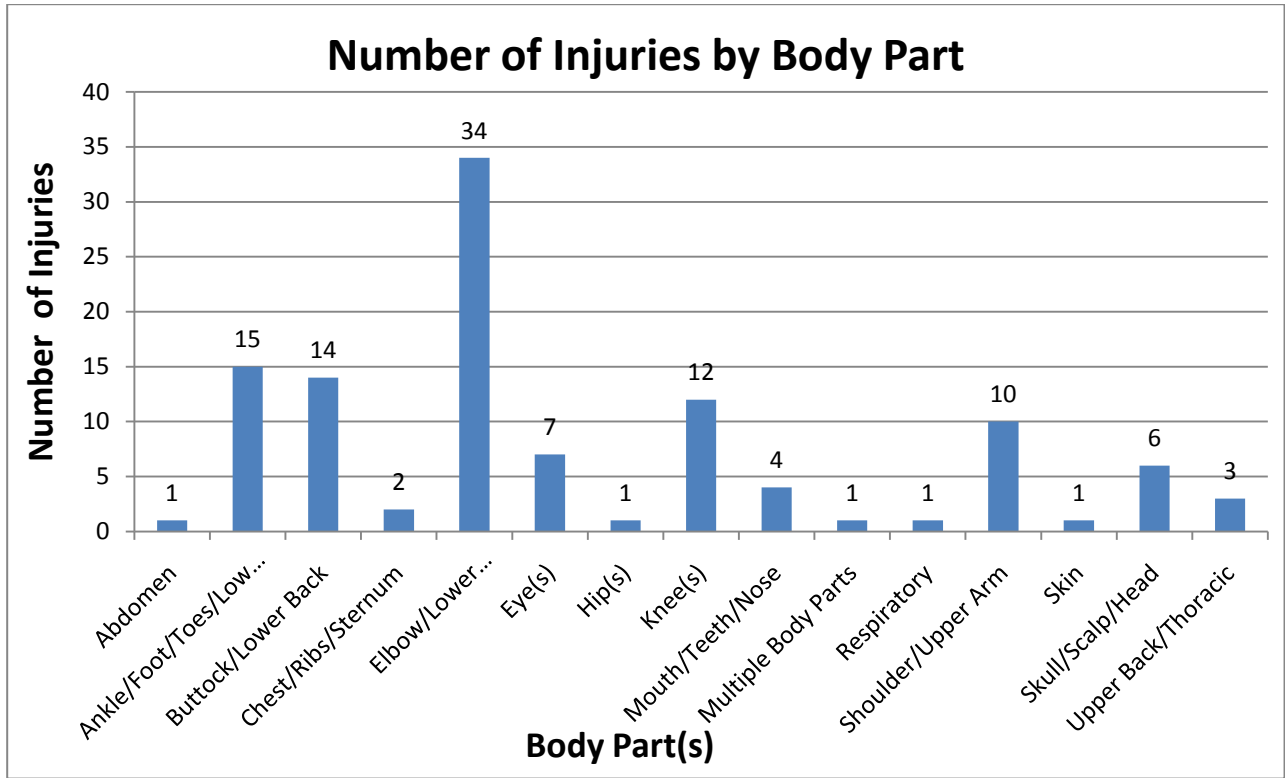
Total Number of Claims – 2 (\$0)

2007 - 0 Claims (\$ 0)

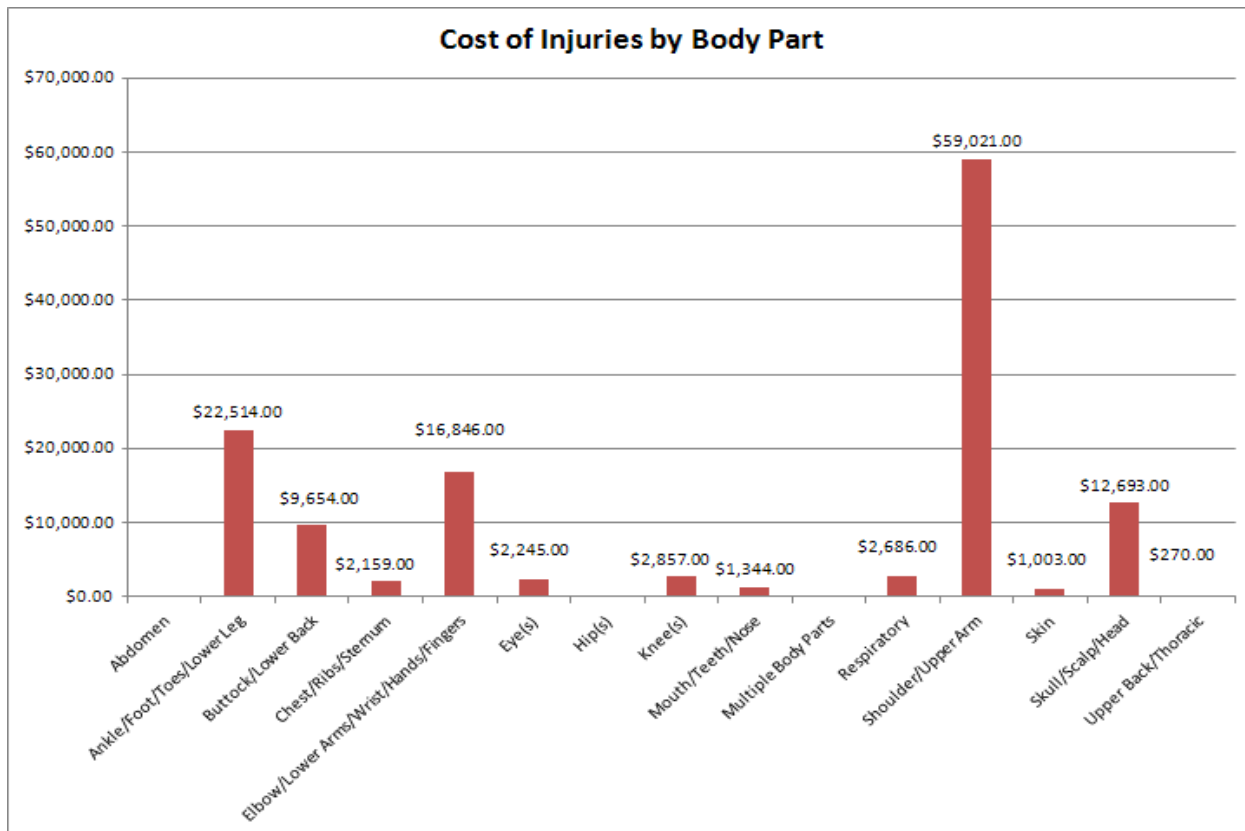
2008 - 0 Claims (\$ 0)

2009 - 2 Claims (\$ 0)

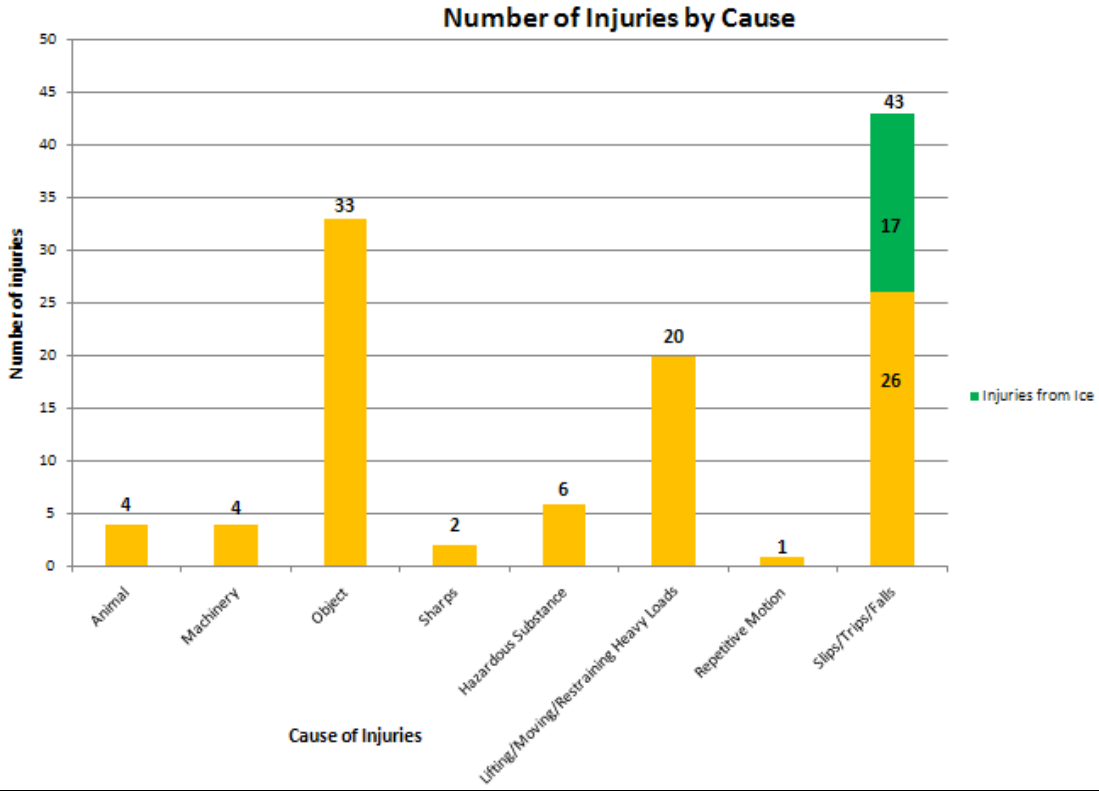
Body Part Injured



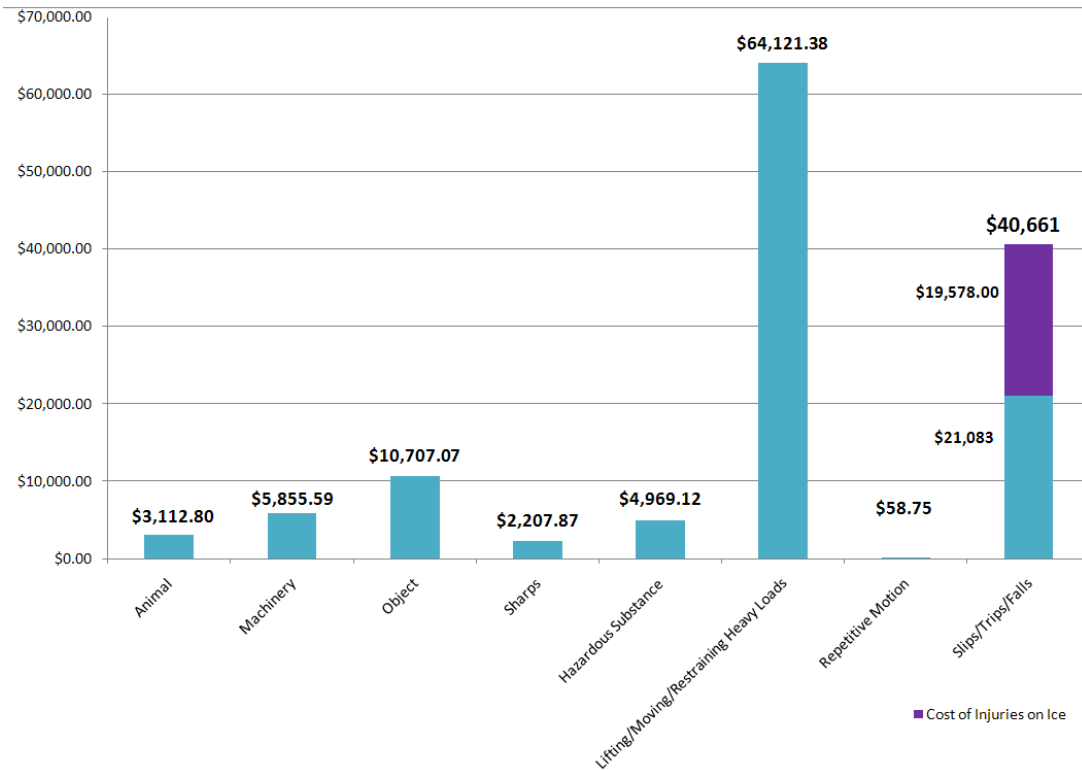
Cost of Injuries



Number of Injuries by Cause



Cost of Injuries by Cause



Recommendations

1. Continue to focus on slips, trips, and falls injury reduction. Raise awareness by:
 - Drafting Falcon Daily messages regarding winter safety tips, proper footwear, and phone number to call to report hazardous areas
 - Identify/repair problem areas/sidewalks with drainage concerns so ice doesn't accumulate.
 - Develop written awareness materials for department distribution starting in November, 2010. Include State Risk Management website slips, trips, and falls posters and other materials.
 - Work with Case IH to determine if there is other equipment we can "purchase" to assist with clearing sidewalks.

2. Recruit Task Team members in Facilities Department to develop injury reduction strategies for extremities (i.e. ankle/foot/toes/lower leg and elbow/lower arms/wrists/hands/fingers.)

3. Continue to work with Dr. Woodrow Fangmeier (UWRF Athletics employee and chiropractor) to train employees on lifting/stretching techniques focusing on back and shoulders. Schedule one safety training session during 2010 as a part of the monthly safety training series. Highly encourage Student Affairs staff to attend this session.

4. Breakdown data into additional categories to look for trends for injury rate such as number of years employed, time of day, location/building, etc.

5. Provide worker's compensation injury data to department chairs on a quarterly basis.