

Looking to get your PhD in WCB?

Account manager Desarae Eastman delights in helping employers understand how the workers' compensation system applies to their business.



Educational seminars cover a broad range of topics

By: Jamie Hall

Desarae Eastman calls them “lightbulb moments”: those instances when she looks around the room and sees one of her “students” experience a moment of understanding.

“Learning the ins and outs of WCB can be complex,” says Desarae. “So if people leave with even one piece of information that will help them, I feel like it’s been a success.”

Desarae is an account manager with WCB-Alberta. Her “students” are not really students at all, but rather employers who attend seminars designed to help businesses navigate the often complex world of workers’ compensation. The seminars cover a broad range of topics: everything from general employer information about WCB, to action planning, to the appeals process.

Learning how to succeed in the system

The return-to-work seminar is one of the most popular. Employers learn about the relationship between their claim costs and their premiums, WCB legislation and how it pertains to their specific responsibilities, best practices for when injuries happen, how they can identify modified work and how to build and implement a successful return-to-work program.

In addition to teaching the seminars, Desarae and her colleagues also work with employers one-on-one, especially those experiencing a surcharge because of high claim costs. It can make for some difficult conversations, she admits, but the result is always worth the challenge. “Yes, it can be hard,” she says. “But when you start to see the fruits of your labour, it’s so rewarding—to call up an employer to tell them they’re no longer in a surcharge, or they’re trending into a discount.”

Connecting it to their business

In the end, it always boils down to education, which Desarae loves, particularly when it comes to the classroom setting.

“I especially like answering the questions that come up during the seminars,” she says. “There are usually great discussions that come up and that’s where I feel like more of the learning happens. It makes things more engaging and interactive; you can see people’s wheels turning when they see how they can apply it to a situation they’re experiencing. That’s the piece I really enjoy.”

Don't take our word for it

We reached out to a couple of recent attendees to ask them their reasons for attending the seminars and what they learned from it:



Meagan Sadoway, HSE disability coordinator, HORIZON NORTH LOGISTICS INC.

“I have been working in the disability management (DM) field for just over 10 years. Recently, I switched employers and felt I needed a refresher on the return-to-work seminar. After a decade in the field, you feel like there aren't many situations that you aren't familiar with. Still, DM is specific to each employer and I felt that I needed to take a step back and get back to the basics, especially since I was dealing with an entirely different demographic of people.

“It was nice to see that we all had a common goal in mind.”

“The seminar was very open and engaging. There were people from all different areas and experiences with DM. The instructor was engaging and very educated on the policies and procedures of WCB. It was nice to see that we all had a common goal in mind with returning the worker back to some form of work as safely and as efficiently as possible. I'm happy to say that I did learn something I did not know previously—that temporary foreign workers are covered under WCB-Alberta. I always assumed that they had some form of coverage in their own jurisdiction, whether that was their home country insurance or WCB. And here I thought I knew almost everything!”

Karina Fok, health and safety coordinator, J&D FOOD SERVICES

“I had just begun working in the industry when one of our warehouse workers got injured. My supervisor decided to send me to the employer information seminar to learn about the coverage that WCB and the company had to provide for the worker. I learned a lot about the benefits of having WCB coverage and about how claims could affect premiums.

“Everything I've learned has been highly applicable to my job.”

“There were a lot of examples given and discussed by people in attendance, and the facilitator was there to answer all of our questions. Since that time, I've also attended the reviews and appeals process seminar and the return-to-work seminar. I especially found it helpful when people shared their examples of modified work, because it gave me a lot of ideas about the kinds of things I could offer our injured workers. Everything I've learned has been highly applicable to my job.”

See for yourself: Head to page 23 for descriptions of the seminars and how to register. >>