

Meat Processing: Case Study

PROBLEM

A large midwestern meat processing organization began to notice that their musculoskeletal injury rates and costs were significantly rising. Their Director of Safety and Health began to seek solutions. Realizing that most of these injuries were occurring among newly hired employees, she began considering pre-hire physical abilities testing as a way to mitigate these injuries.

The majority of their injuries were musculoskeletal strains and sprains of the upper extremity – especially wrists and hands due to the heavy repetitive gripping performed by meat processing associates. Their associates also sustained a good number of back injuries as they lifted heavy bins of processed materials and waste. In addition, they had a considerable number of slips, trips, and falls due to the constantly wet and slippery surfaces upon which they worked. These injuries and the related lost and restricted duty days affected productivity, employee morale, and customer satisfaction.

When meat processing associates are absent from work due to injury, orders are not filled on time, and customer satisfaction and employee morale decrease. Working overtime to compensate for employee absences, in turn, exacerbated fatigue and created additional injuries in the remaining workforce.

SOLUTION

This Director of Safety had started a successful pilot pre-hire/post-offer Physical Abilities Testing program with a local hospital and wanted to expand the program outside their pilot locale to other midwestern states. The local hospital did not have the geographical footprint to assist the company in other locations. However, the hospital had long utilized ErgoScience testing protocols for their pre-hire and post-injury physical abilities testing. So, they suggested that the organization approach ErgoScience for expansion of the program to other locations.

ErgoScience conducted job analysis and developed and implemented job-specific tests at three of the company's meat processing warehouses where musculoskeletal disorders were most problematic. ErgoScience has a patented tiered testing process, ErgoPlace™, with multiple pass points to allow its clients to use testing for placement as well as selection. This organization took advantage of ErgoPlace™ to hire more employees and yet match their abilities more closely to the job demands.

RESULTS

After approximately three years of testing at three locations:

**THE TOTAL INCURRED
DIRECT COSTS**



**DECREASED BY AN
AVERAGE OF 86%.**

**THEIR RETURN ON
INVESTMENT WAS**

5:1

**THE NUMBER OF STRAINS AND
SPRAINS AND SLIPS, TRIPS, AND
FALLS AMONG NEW HIRES**



DECREASED BY 63%

Overall, this organization was very pleased with the results of its pre-hire Physical Abilities Testing Program. The use of the test for placement as well as selection allowed them to hire and place a broader range of individuals as well as reduce injuries and costs. The program was a win for Safety, Human Resources, and Operations.