

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS WATCHDOG

EMPLOYERS SPONSOR TEMPORARY DISABILITY BILL

The California Coalition on Workers' Compensation (CCWC), of which PIC is a supporter, has introduced legislation to correct a flaw in the 2004 workers' compensation reform package.

The reform set temporary disability (TD) benefits payable to injured workers at 104 weeks. This is being interpreted to mean that an injured worker is only eligible for 104 weeks of TD benefits, beginning on the first day they are paid benefits. Thus if an injured worker is paid one day of TD benefits, their 104 weeks of eligibility for benefits continues to run even if they return to work. So, if that person returns to work for a whole two years after that one day of receiving benefits, they are not eligible to receive benefits even in the event that they have surgery.

The bill sponsored by the CCWC to correct the problems with the TD cap would allow for 104 weeks of aggregate TD benefits within either three years of the first date of TD, or four years of the date of injury, whichever comes first.

The key now is to see if labor is willing to support this solution to the problem.

SCAQMD NEWS

A couple of weeks ago, we published an article about the rumor that the SCAQMD (District) won't lower the VOC limits for lithographic roller and blanket wash come December 31, 2007. At that time, we said nothing could be further from the truth.

After a recent meeting with the District,

NEW APRIL 1, 2007 TAX RATES

Applies within designated city limits only:

City of Arroyo Grande 7.75%
 City of Del Rey Oaks 8.25%
 City of Dinuba 8.50%
 City of Farmersville 8.25%
 City of Grover Beach 7.75%
 City of Inglewood 8.75%
 City of Manteca 8.25%
 City of Morro Bay 7.75%
 City of Nevada City 7.875%
 City of Pinole 8.75%
 City of Porterville 8.25%
 City of San Bernardino 8.00%
 City of San Luis Obispo 7.75%

City of Santa Cruz 8.50%
 City of Tulare 8.25%
 City of Visalia 8.00%
 City of Vista 8.25%
 City of Watsonville 8.25%
 City of Williams 7.75%

Applies in all areas of county except cities listed above
 Tulare County 7.75%

Applies to all locations in county
 Madera County 7.75%

we are more convinced that it is holding hard to the change. The District believes that the standard of 100 grams per liter VOC can currently be met, particularly for hand wipe operations. And even if the 100 grams per liter VOC limit might be out of reach for automatic systems, the District believes that a much lower VOC limit than the current 650 grams per liter can be achieved.

Given the urgency of the situation, in the past year alone, PIASC has invested tens of thousands of dollars in dealing with this issue, in research and coordinating field testing efforts.

Moreover, cleanup solvent manufacturers are working overtime to formulate low VOC solvents for printers to test. The more formulations that are available for testing, the more printers can find what works and what doesn't work at limits lower than the current VOC standards of 500 (hand wipe) and 650 (automatic) grams per liter.

For more information, please call Gerry Bonetto, Ext. 248.

CELLPHONES NOT LINKED TO CANCER

Using cellphones, even over a long period of time, does not seem to raise the user's risk of cancer, according to a study reported in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

The study, by the American Cancer Society, is the first to include people who had used mobile phones for as long as 21 years. The Society's lead research said that of 16 previous studies looking at cellphone use and brain tumors, only 2 found any link.

This study examined cellphone records for more than 420,000 adults in Denmark, and compared those to the number of cancer cases within that population. The goal was to see if the rate of cases among cellphone users was different from that of the general population. It was not.

Even so, the study cautions that it is not a final say on the matter. It adds that there is ongoing need to monitor the risk.



Affiliated Associations:

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NO MORE "FREE" FREEWAYS?

According to Sacramento insiders, there's support in the legislature that California should follow other states and look to tolls to help bankroll new roads.

Local and state transportation agencies are already planning several such projects on busy urban corridors, and some of the world's largest investment firms are lining up with proposals that could leave them in control of some major new roads.

Voters last November approved billions in borrowing for roads, but that was only a start; it's around one-third of what is needed to meet all the state's transportation needs. The legislature, however, was shrewd enough to realize a \$33 billion transportation bond would have little likelihood of passing. Nor would voters support a major increase in the gas tax. That leaves toll roads.

In a recent article about transportation in the *Los Angeles Times*, Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) said, "The existing way of paying for these projects is not going to work. We're used to free roads and everything being free. That is a 1950s model. If we want to move forward, we are going to have to head in a different direction."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been pushing for the state to start shifting the cost — and some control — of road building to the private sector, and last year the legislature authorized government agencies to build four demonstration projects in partnership with investment banks, shipping companies and other businesses.

BAY AREA TO ADOPT SOUTH COAST AIR RULE

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) plans to amend its cleanup solvent standards for lithographic printing (Regulation 8, Rule 20). In conversations with staff, we have learned that it plans on adopting

POSTAL COMMISSION APPROVE RATE HIKE

The Postal Regulatory Commission (PRC) recommended a 7.6 percent overall increase in postage rates, including a 2-cent increase for the price of a first-class stamp that would raise it to 41 cents.

The increase in the cost of a first-class stamp will be the fifth since Jan. 10, 1999, when the rate moved up to 33 cents. Postage rates last increased in January 2006. The increase could go into effect as early as May.

In addition, the PRC recommended a 2-cent increase for postcards, from 24 to 26 cents, and approved decreases in the price of 2-ounce letters, bank statements, targeted appeal letters by nonprofits, and electronic certified mail return receipt.

The recommendations now go before the Postal Service's Board of Governors, which can accept the recommendations or send them back to the PRC for adjustment.

PRC rate requests include:

- Priority Mail -1 pound, \$4.60, up from \$4.05.
- Express Mail - 8 ounces, \$16.25, up from \$14.40.
- Parcel Post - 5 pounds, \$5.67, up from \$4.36.
- Certified Mail - \$2.65, up from \$2.40.
- Money Orders up to \$500 - \$1.05, up from 95 cents.
- Bank statement, 3 ounces - 58.4 cents, down from 73.9 cents.
- Department store bill, presorted - 37.3 cents, up from 37.1 cents.
- Advertising, 2 ounces, presorted - 23.3 cents, up from 21.4 cents.
- Advertising, 9 ounces, presorted, 62.9 cents, up from 57.0 cents.
- Nonprofit mail, 1 ounce, 16.4 cents, down from 17.0 cents.
- Library mail, 2 pounds, - presorted - \$1.88, up from \$1.78.

the standards set in the South Coast air district. Currently those standards are as follows:

- 500 grams per liter—hand wipe blanket and roller cleanup
- 650 grams per liter—automatic systems for blanket and roller cleanup
- 650 grams per liter—UV/EB hand wipe and automatic for blanket and roller wash
- Exemption for the cleaning of metering rollers, dampening rollers and printing plates.

These are, however, interim limits. The South Coast rule calls for the adoption of 100 grams per liter limits for all lithographic processes on December 31, 2007.

At this time, it is unclear whether the BAAQMD plans on adopting the interim higher standards or the lower standard

—100 grams per liter.

The interim limits will be hard to argue against, since they are already being applied in the South Coast. The San Joaquin air district will soon adopt the interim limits until 2010, at which time all lithographic printers will have to comply with the 100 gram per liter limit. The San Joaquin approach is the most reasonable—and achievable with the least amount of disruption to the industry.

We will be meeting with the BAAQMD in the near future to learn what they are planning in both the short and long-term. Thereafter, we'll let you know the BAAQMD's plan and timetable for this amendment.

The Rule amendments, however, are scheduled for adoption before the first of next year.