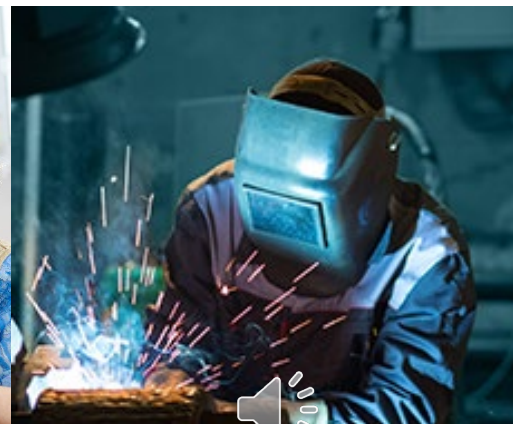




CENTRAL MINNESOTA
Jobs & Training Services

CARING FOR YOUR WORKFORCE

Workplace Injury Prevention and Return-to-work Essentials



Where Workforce Skills Meet Opportunity!

About CMJTS

Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services



CENTRAL MINNESOTA Jobs & Training Services

Serving employers in 11 counties across Central Minnesota

1

Connect with Qualified Workers

Access a pipeline of job-ready candidates. We help match employers with skilled workers who fit your needs — at no cost to you.

2

Employee Training Programs

Incumbent Worker Training, On-the-Job Training, Work Experience, and Registered Apprenticeships to upskill your existing team.

3

Business Resources & Support

Workforce planning, HR guidance, compliance support, and connections to regional business development resources.





CENTRAL MINNESOTA
Jobs & Training Services

Grow Your Business in Central Minnesota

Our Business Service Coordinators are ready to help you grow.

Our Business Service Coordinator Team can lead you through the steps to recruit, train, and employ the skilled workers you need!

— **Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine Counties**

Rebecca Perrotti – 612-247-9319; rperrotti@cmjts.org

— **Sherburne and Wright Counties**

Tim Zipoy – 612-325-7791; tzipoy@cmjts.org

— **Kandiyohi, McLeod, Meeker, and Renville Counties**

Bridget Paulson – 320-290-7685; bpaulson@cmjts.org

— **Visit Online**

www.cmjts.org — your hub for workforce solutions in Central Minnesota.

— **Scan the QR code**

Scan the QR code to get you to our Business Service page.



Module 1: Workplace Injuries — Prevention & Response

1

Part 1 – Identification and Prevention

- Introduction
- Common Workplace Injuries
- Why Injuries Happen
- Prevention Strategies

2

Part 2 – Workplace Injuries and Response

- Responding to Injuries
- Importance of Early Reporting
- Importance of Return-to-Work Strategies



You Will Receive:

- Employer Resource Toolkit
- Safety checklists
- Ergonomics Toolkit
- Injury report templates



RTW in Physical Environments

Production, Construction, Shipping, Warehousing & Trades

"Our jobs are all physical — there's no light duty here."

The most common RTW objection in physical industries — and almost never true.

Every physical operation has non-physical tasks

Quality inspection, safety observation, dispatch, administrative support, materials coordination — these exist in every production facility.

Employers who look harder find more

Studies show operations that complete a formal task inventory identify an average of 8–12 viable modified duty roles per worksite.

The cost of not looking is measurable

Every week of TTD in a physical role averages \$1,200–\$2,000+ in wage replacement alone — before medical and indirect costs. RTW eliminates most of that.



Injury Profile: Physical Environments

Severity, frequency, and RTW complexity in production, construction & trades

Musculoskeletal / Overexertion

Manual lifting, pushing, pulling, and carrying — the leading cause of serious nonfatal injuries in physical industries. Restriction profiles: weight limits, positional limits, no bending/twisting.

Most common: warehousing, construction, healthcare.

Equipment-Related Incidents

Caught-in/between, struck-by, and crush injuries. Highest severity of any category. Restriction profiles: no powered equipment, no heavy machinery, no vibrating tools.

Experienced operators retain high value in training and coordination roles.

Repetitive Motion / Cumulative Trauma

Assembly line repetition, scanning, and power tool vibration. Cumulative trauma sidelines workers for weeks or months. Restriction profiles: no repetitive motion, vibration limits, rotation required.

Often underreported until the condition requires surgery.

Slips, Trips & Falls on Hazardous Terrain

Elevated fall risk on job sites, loading docks, and wet floors. Foot/ankle, knee, and hip injuries common. Restriction profiles: no uneven surfaces, no climbing, limited standing.

Look beyond the floor: tool room, dispatch, safety office, training.

Acute Trauma: Lacerations, Fractures, Burns

Sharp tools, rotating equipment, and high-force impacts. Restriction profiles: single-limb use, no grip, no heat exposure. Recovery timelines are longer — plan a graduated return from Day 1.

Full return may take months. Start Phase 1 as soon as any capacity exists.



The Safety Imperative in Physical RTW

Returning an employee to work that exceeds restrictions creates compounded risk

WARNING: Reinjury in a physical environment is almost always more severe than the original injury.

Restrictions Are Non-Negotiable

If the physician says no lifting over 20 pounds, that means no lifting over 20 pounds — not 'probably fine for 25.' Supervisors who allow employees to exceed restrictions create reinjury liability for the employer and real physical harm for the employee.

The Employee Cannot Self-Authorize

"I feel fine" does not override medical restrictions. Employees in physical roles often push themselves to demonstrate they're capable — and to avoid peer pressure. The supervisor's job is to enforce the restriction, not defer to the employee's assessment.

Safety Culture Extends to Modified Duty

PPE requirements, lockout/tagout protocols, fall protection, and all safety standards apply to transitional duty employees. Modified duty does not create a safety exemption. The transitional role must be evaluated for its own hazards before assignment.

OSHA Recordability Continues During RTW

If an employee sustains a new or aggravated work-related injury while on modified duty, it is OSHA recordable. Returning someone to a role that causes reinjury is recorded, investigated, and may trigger OSHA scrutiny of your RTW process.

Before Returning to Physical Work

Restriction Review

- Restrictions received and read in full
- Supervisor briefed on specific limits
- Employee briefed — signed acknowledgment
- Carrier nurse case manager notified

Job Hazard Analysis for Modified Role

- Physical demands of transitional role documented
- All demands confirmed within restrictions
- New hazards in transitional area identified
- Employee oriented to any unfamiliar area

Safety Compliance

- PPE requirements for transitional role confirmed
- Lockout/tagout procedures reviewed if applicable
- Emergency procedures communicated
- Supervisor check-in: start AND end of each shift



When the Employee Works Beyond Restrictions Anyway

A supervisor framework for enforcement, documentation, and escalation

This is not defiance — it is almost always one of three things: the employee wants to prove they are capable; they feel peer pressure from coworkers carrying their workload, or they fear that appearing unable will cost them their job. None are bad intentions — all create real reinjury liability.

1 Address It Immediately — Every Time

The first time a supervisor observes a restriction being exceeded and says nothing, the standard is set. You cannot reclaim that authority after the fact.

Script:

"Hey — I need you to step back from that. Your restriction says no lifting over 20 lbs and that box is 40. I need you at the station we set up for you. I know you feel good — but this is what we need to do right now."

Short. Specific. No negotiation. No exceptions. Every time.

2 Document Every Instance

Every time a supervisor redirects an employee back within restrictions — write it down. Date, time, what was observed, what was said, and whether the employee complied.

Why it matters:

If the employee is reinjured, documentation shows you enforced restrictions and the employee chose to exceed them — which significantly affects employer liability exposure. A 90-second logbook entry can save months of legal complications.

No documentation = no evidence you enforced it.

3 Have the Escalating Conversation

If redirected more than once, a formal sit-down is required. Not disciplinary — direct. Document the conversation and the employee's response.

Script:

"I've had to redirect you away from restricted activities multiple times. I understand why — you want to contribute. But if you are reinjured doing something you weren't cleared for, your claim becomes significantly more complicated. I need your commitment today that you will stay within your restrictions. Can you give me that?"

Have them sign the documentation if possible.

If It Continues After Formal Conversation — HR Territory

You CANNOT discipline for filing a workers' comp claim — that is retaliation (§ 176.82). You CAN discipline for failing to follow a documented safety directive. Those are two different things. Involve HR and your carrier before acting.

The Bottom Line

Your documented response to the employee's choices determines your liability. Stay consistent, stay documented, stay in contact with your carrier.



Restriction Patterns & Available Work

Common physical restrictions — and the RTW options they leave open

In physical environments, restrictions eliminate primary roles more completely than in offices. The answer is not 'no RTW available' — it is 'look beyond the production floor.'

Restriction	Physical Work Impacted	Available Transitional Options	Notes
No lifting over 10–20 lbs	Most production, picking, packing, materials handling	Quality inspection (light parts), labeling, inventory counting, tool crib, seated assembly	Often the most workable — sedentary functions exist in nearly every facility
No powered equipment	Forklift, heavy machinery, CDL vehicles, aerial lifts	Spotter/signaler, dock coordinator, safety observer, dispatch, pre-trip inspection review	Your most experienced operator knows the facility — use that knowledge
No prolonged standing / walking	Assembly line, floor work, inspection rounds	Seated inspection station, dispatch coordination, tool room, seated quality checks	Stool + modified workstation can enable seated production work
No vibrating tools	Power tools, jackhammers, compactors, grinders	Layout work, measuring, supervision, materials prep (hand tools only)	Vibration restriction is highly specific — non-power functions often
Single arm / hand use	Most two-handed production tasks, tool operation	Inventory counting, routing, verbal supervision, safety escort, one-hand capable assembly	Voice-guided coordination and inspection roles work well
Foot / ankle, no uneven terrain	Construction sites, outdoor work, dock areas, ramps	Site office functions, permit coordination, material ordering, safety documentation	Bring the employee into the controlled environment — office, tool room, or trailer



RTW in Practice: Role-by-Role Examples

Five key roles — full guide with 9 positions in your toolkit

Warehouse / Picker-Packer

Restriction: shoulder, no lifting over 15 lbs

Seated label printing and application, inventory verification by count (not lifting), packing of items under weight limit, inbound receipt logging

Forklift Operator

Restriction: no powered equipment operation

Spotter and signaler for active forklift traffic, dock coordination, load manifest verification, pre-trip inspection documentation, training newer operators on protocols

Construction Laborer

Restriction: foot/ankle, no uneven terrain

Material staging from a paved, level staging area, site safety monitor from designated observation point, tool inventory management, permit and documentation coordination

Assembly Line Worker

Restriction: repetitive motion limit, rotation required

Quality inspector for non-repetitive visual checks, line setup supervisor, light component staging, training documentation, ergonomic assessment support for the line

CDL / Truck Driver

Restriction: cannot drive — medical hold

Dispatch coordination, pre-trip inspection review and documentation, driver communications and routing support, DOT compliance paperwork, fleet maintenance scheduling

4 More Roles in Your Toolkit

Maintenance Technician
Production Machine Operator
Shipping / Receiving Clerk
Trades (Electrician, Plumber, HVAC)



Functional Job Descriptions

Your most important RTW tool in physical environments — build them before the injury

What Is a Functional Job Description?

A Functional Job Description (FJD) describes the physical demands of a role in measurable, objective terms — not just the duties. It documents lifting frequency and weight, standing hours, walking distances, grip requirements, vibration exposure, and environmental conditions. When restrictions come in, you match them to the FJD — not to assumptions.

Why It Matters for Physical RTW

When a physician writes 'no heavy lifting,' that is vague. Does your job require 30 lbs or 80 lbs? If you don't have a FJD, you can't answer that question — and you can't tell the physician whether the employee can return to their role or a modified one. The FJD is the bridge between the medical world and the workplace.

How to Build One

For each high-risk role in your operation, document: (1) lifting frequency and maximum weight, (2) standing hours per shift, (3) walking distance, (4) grip and manual dexterity requirements, (5) vibration exposure, (6) posture requirements, (7) environmental conditions. Have the employee and supervisor review it for accuracy.

How to Use It

When restrictions arrive: give the FJD to the treating provider and ask 'Can this employee safely perform the attached job description?' Ask for restrictions in functional terms: 'no lifting over X lbs' rather than 'light duty only.' Use your carrier's nurse case manager to facilitate provider communication if restrictions are vague.

FJD Component Checklist

The full FJD template is in your toolkit as a fillable worksheet. It covers all 13 physical demand components:

- Lifting (frequency, weight, height)
- Carrying, pushing, pulling
- Standing, walking, sitting
- Climbing, grip/dexterity
- Vibration exposure (hand-arm & whole-body)
- Reach, environment, PPE, mental demands

Free resources:

NIOSH physical demand tools: [cdc.gov/niosh](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh)
Your WC carrier nurse case manager
MN DLI: dli.mn.gov



Graduated Return-to-Work

A phased approach for physical environments where full recovery takes time

Graduated RTW allows an employee to return to increasing levels of physical demand over multiple weeks — matching their recovery timeline rather than waiting for full clearance. It is the standard of care in physical RTW.

Phase 1 Weeks 1-2	Phase 2 Weeks 3-4	Phase 3 Weeks 5-6	Phase 4 Full Clearance
<p>Administrative / Supervisory Only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- No physical production demands-- Documentation, scheduling, coordination tasks-- Training, quality review, safety observation (seated or minimal walking)-- Reduced hours if medically required (4-6 hrs/day)	<p>Light Physical Functions Added</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- Light physical tasks within restrictions (inspection, light assembly)-- Limited standing — alternating sit/stand-- Short distance walking on level surfaces-- Full hours if tolerated	<p>Transitional Production Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- Heavier tasks within current weight limits-- Longer standing/walking within restriction-- Work closer to regular role — modified only where required-- Peer integration — working alongside regular crew	<p>Full Duty Return</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- Return to all pre-injury duties-- No restrictions in place-- Supervisor check-in for first two weeks — monitor for pain recurrence-- Ergonomic review to prevent recurrence
<p><i>Cleared for sedentary / minimal physical activity only</i></p>	<p><i>Restrictions relaxed at provider visit — increased tolerance confirmed</i></p>	<p><i>Provider confirms significant functional improvement, advancing restrictions</i></p>	<p><i>Physician provides written full-duty clearance — no restrictions</i></p>
<p>Provider re-evaluation before advancing</p>	<p>Re-evaluate with supervisor daily for first week of Phase 2</p>	<p>Weekly supervisor check-in; provider visit before Phase 4</p>	<p>Celebrate the return publicly and genuinely</p>



Legal & Safety Risks in Physical RTW

What creates exposure — and how to prevent it

Assigning Work Beyond Restrictions

The highest single source of legal exposure in physical RTW. If the employee is reinjured performing work that exceeded their medical restrictions, the employer created the conditions for that injury. The claim escalates dramatically and employer liability is clear.

Document that you received restrictions, reviewed them, designed the assignment within them, and briefed the employee — in writing — before the first day of modified duty.

Suitable Work Obligation (Minn. Stat. § 176.101)

When suitable work exists within restrictions, Minnesota law requires you to offer it. Failing to identify and offer suitable work — even when it exists — can result in continued TTD liability that would otherwise have been avoided. The obligation runs both ways: offer it, document it.

Complete the 3-question RTW test every time restrictions are received. Document the result. If no suitable work is available, document that conclusion with the reasoning.

OSHA Recordkeeping During Modified Duty

Injuries and illnesses that occur during transitional duty assignments are OSHA recordable if they meet recordability criteria. Assigning modified duty does not create a safe harbor. A reinjury on the production floor during Phase 2 is still a recordable — and an investigation trigger.

Conduct a Job Hazard Analysis for every transitional assignment. Document PPE requirements. Brief the employee on hazards in any new area. Maintain OSHA 300 log accuracy throughout.

Union and CBA Considerations

In unionized workplaces, transitional duty assignments must comply with the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Modified duty that displaces a union member in a protected job classification, violates seniority provisions, or conflicts with agreed duty assignments can create grievances and labor relations issues alongside the workers' comp claim.

Review the CBA before making any modified duty offer. Involve the union steward at the policy level — not the individual case. Your carrier's legal resources can help navigate this.



The 3-Question RTW Test: Physical Edition

Applied to production, construction, and trades — with real examples

In physical environments, the answer is less often 'yes' to Question 1 — but Questions 2 and 3 almost always produce viable options if you look systematically. Do not stop at Question 1.

1

Can this employee do any part of their current job?

In physical environments, the answer is sometimes no — especially for severe restrictions or heavy-equipment roles. But always ask: is there a sedentary, supervisory, or inspection function within their current job description that fits the restrictions?

- *Forklift op with back restriction: can they supervise or coordinate from dock office?*
- *Assembly worker with shoulder: can they do visual inspection at a seated station?*
- *Laborer on construction: can they do site safety observation from a fixed point?*

2

Is there another task in the business they could safely perform?


This is where physical environment RTW is won. Every operation has functions beyond the production floor: dispatch, safety, quality, maintenance coordination, tool room, administrative support, training. These are your RTW inventory.

- *Driver on medical hold: dispatch coordination, DOT compliance, fleet documentation*
- *Tradesperson with hand injury: job planning, permit research, materials procurement*
- *Machinist with repetitive restriction: SOP writing, training new operators, parts ordering*

3

Can we modify a task or role to fit their restrictions?

Physical environments require more creative modification than offices — but options exist. Weight limit policy, sit/stand option for inspection, team-lift requirement, tool substitution, rotation schedule. Each modification must be evaluated for safety before implementation.

- *Lifting restriction: implement strict weight limit policy + provide dolly for this employee*
- *Standing restriction: seated inspection station — stool +  adjustable surface*
- *Vibration restriction: hand-tool alternatives for specific tasks where power is not required*

Industry-Specific Resources

Free tools, guidance, and consultation for physical environment employers

Warehousing & Distribution

OSHA Warehousing & Distribution

[osha.gov/warehousing](https://www.osha.gov/warehousing)

Safety standards, material handling, ergonomics

NIOSH Lifting Equation (RNLE)

[cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/nioshwel.html](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/ergonomics/nioshwel.html)

Free tool to evaluate lifting risk and safe limits

Powered Industrial Trucks Standard

[osha.gov/power-industrial-trucks](https://www.osha.gov/power-industrial-trucks)

Forklift safety, operator certification requirements

Construction

CPWR Center for Construction Research

[cpwr.com](https://www.cpwr.com)

RTW resources, fall prevention, tool safety

OSHA Construction Standards (29 CFR 1926)

[osha.gov/construction](https://www.osha.gov/construction)

All construction safety standards, free access

AGC Safety Resources

[agc.org/learn/education-training/safety](https://www.agc.org/learn/education-training/safety)

Industry-specific RTW and safety resources

Manufacturing & Production

NIOSH Manufacturing Safety

[cdc.gov/niosh/topics/manufacturing](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/manufacturing)

Hazard controls, ergonomics, PPE guidance

NSC Work to Zero Initiative

[nsc.org/work-to-zero](https://www.nsc.org/work-to-zero)

Injury elimination resources for manufacturers

MN OSHA Manufacturing Resources

[osha.mn.gov](https://www.osha.mn.gov)

MN-specific standards and consultation

Transportation & CDL

FMCSA Medical Programs

[fmcsa.dot.gov/medical](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/medical)

CDL medical certification, return-to-duty process

DOT Return-to-Duty Process

[fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/drug-alcohol-testing](https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/drug-alcohol-testing)

Post-incident RTW requirements for CDL holders

NIOSH Transportation Sector

[cdc.gov/niosh/topics/transportation](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/transportation)

Driver health, ergonomics, injury prevention

All Physical Industries — Free Consultation

MN OSHA On-Site Consultation

[dli.mn.gov/consultation](https://www.dli.mn.gov/consultation)

FREE — no penalties, confidential workplace safety visits

MN DLI Workers' Comp & RTW

[dli.mn.gov/business/workers-compensation/return-work](https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/workers-compensation/return-work)

MN-specific RTW guidance, suitable work resources

Workers Compensation Carrier

Your Workers compensation Carrier has a wide variety of resources available.



Steps for Providing a Modified Duty Assignment

What to do from restriction receipt to first day back

1

Receive & Review Restrictions

Obtain the written restriction form from the treating provider. Read it literally — note start date, duration, and specific task or hour limits.

2

Identify Available Modified Work

Apply the 3-Question RTW Test. Match restrictions against available tasks. Document what the employee can and cannot do — do not assume.

3

Prepare the Written Offer Letter

Complete the Suitable Work Offer Letter. Include job title, start date, hours, pay rate, specific duties, and which restrictions are being accommodated.

4

Notify Your Workers' Comp Carrier

Contact the carrier before the employee returns. Provide the offer letter, restrictions, and start date. Wage information may affect TTD benefit calculations.

5

Brief the Supervisor & Prep the Workspace

Share restrictions — not the diagnosis — with the direct supervisor. Arrange equipment and accommodations before Day 1. Confirm the workspace meets restrictions.

6

Monitor, Document & Re-evaluate

Check in at Day 3, Week 1, and each new appointment. Update the carrier on any restriction changes. Set a re-evaluation date with the treating provider.





You Have the Tools.

YOUR THREE ACTION ITEMS BEFORE THE NEXT CLAIM:

- Complete the Transitional Duty Task Inventory for your operation (Toolkit)
- Build Functional Job Descriptions for your 3 highest-injury-risk roles
- Brief your supervisors: restrictions are non-negotiable, and the 3-question test is required





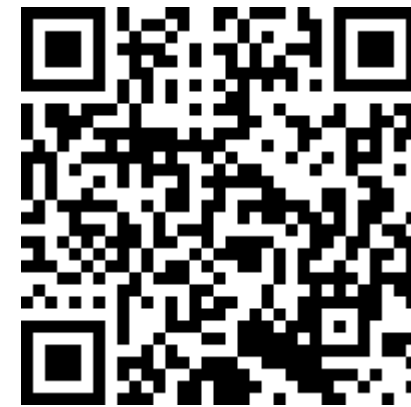
CENTRAL MINNESOTA
Jobs & Training Services

Resource Guide

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- ▶ Injury report templates
- ▶ Workplace safety checklists
- ▶ Hazard identification worksheets
- ▶ Ergonomic assessment guides
- ▶ Return-to-Work planning tools

Scan the QR code or visit cmjts.org
to access your toolkit.



Thank you for attending