



# RISK★TEX

INTERAGENCY COMMUNICATION FROM THE STATE OFFICE of RISK MANAGEMENT ★ NOVEMBER 1998

## RENOVATIONS & INNOVATIONS

by Bruce Birdwell, ARM, CSP, Executive Director

The State Office of Risk Management is continually trying to improve customer service and safety awareness in an effort to better serve state agencies and their employees. Some of the changes going on, behind the scenes and in front of your eyes, include:

- A reorganization of the Claims Operations section;
- Customer service surveys;
- A SORM Web page on the Internet; and
- Individualized safety training being offered to state employees.

All of the changes are geared toward achieving the four major objectives outlined in the last issue of *Risk★Tex*: building partnerships; providing quality information and services; increasing our utilization of technology; and improving our efficiency and cost effectiveness.

The Claims Operations section has added three supervisors who are responsible for increasing accountability and consistency when working with workers' compensation claims. The supervisors will examine claims files periodically to review cases and ensure claims adjusters are following SORM guidelines and procedures. The supervisors will ensure claims are being handled correctly and claimants are receiving proper service. (For more information, see related article on page 2.)

A customer satisfaction survey, which was recently mailed to workers' compensation claimants asking them to rate our services, is another way we're trying to better our agency. SORM employees are also addressing areas of improvement identified by a recent audit of the claims section.

Increased communication and visibility is another change, which we are accomplishing through our Website, [www.sorm.state.tx.us](http://www.sorm.state.tx.us). The site includes information about the various SORM sections, a brief description of each board member, and a list of contact names, phone numbers, and E-mail addresses of key personnel. Look for additions and new features in the future. Another communication project is providing state agencies with a poster that encourages employees to report potential fraud and abuse of the workers' compensation system.

The way state employees are being trained is also getting a new look. The Agency Outreach and Training section offers agencies a new training method — using interactive CD-ROMs that can be viewed on an individual basis. (See article on page 5.)

In another step to help state agencies, an actuarial study is scheduled to be completed in early November

**(Continued on page 2)**



STATE OFFICE of RISK MANAGEMENT

### MISSION STATEMENT

*The State Office of Risk Management will provide active leadership to enable State of Texas agencies to protect their employees, the general public, and the state's physical and financial assets by reducing and controlling risk in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.*

ADOPTED MARCH 1998

### BOARD MEMBERS

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## A PUSH FOR BETTER SERVICE

The Claims Operations section is getting a face lift. Gone are the days when state agencies would have to track down the SORM adjuster handling a certain workers' compensation claim. The files would switch from adjuster to adjuster, creating a sometimes confusing atmosphere.

Now, all claims filed from one agency will be handled by one group of SORM adjusters. One adjuster group deals with all the claims from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the Texas Youth Commission, and the Texas Department of Public Safety. Another group handles all Mental Health/Mental Retardation claims. The third group takes care of the claims from all other state agencies.

The reason behind the switch is to provide agencies with more efficient service, a better handling of their claims, and a reduction in the number of adjusters handling each claim, thereby reducing the possibility of errors.

Three supervisors have been called in to oversee the new working units. The supervisors will be trying to increase accountability and consistency in the Claims Operations section. They will also examine claims files on a periodic basis to review cases and ensure claims adjusters are following SORM guidelines and procedures.

The reorganization should allow agencies to get to know and build a better working relationship with SORM claims adjusters. The agencies now have one contact person (the supervisor) and a small group of adjusters to call at SORM when inquiring about a claim, instead of trying to track down which one of the many adjusters was handling the claim on that day.

## RENOVATIONS & INNOVATIONS

**(Continued from page 1)**

that will project the dollar payouts for this fiscal year and the next biennium for the 25 agencies with the highest losses, and the state as a whole. The study will assist agencies in estimating their losses.

Report formats are being revised to reduce the length of the Risk Management Program Reviews and Safety Program Evaluations to assist the agency risk managers in paper reduction and time management.

SORM is also in the process of placing the "Risk Management for Texas State Agencies" guidelines on our Website.

The SORM Claims Support section is also keeping an eye out for potential fraud cases to the workers' compensation system. So far, SORM has referred four claims to the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission as possible fraud cases, with one resulting in an indictment. (See article on page 4.)

The changes and additions occurring at SORM are all aimed at helping our customers — state agencies. Our goal is to ensure all agencies are receiving the best, most efficient service for workers' compensation and risk management issues.

## SORM DIRECTORY OF SERVICE

|                                                          |                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
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OFFICE HOURS: 7:30 A.M.-5:30 P.M. MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY  
 MAILING ADDRESS: STATE OFFICE of RISK MANAGEMENT, P.O. BOX 13777, AUSTIN, TX 78711-3777  
 FAX NUMBERS: 512-472-0228 • 512-472-0234 • 512-472-0237

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.SORM.STATE.TX.US](http://WWW.SORM.STATE.TX.US)

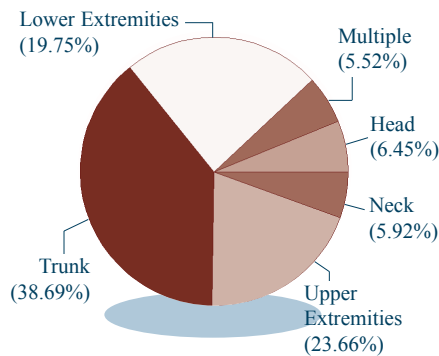
## Workers' Comp Annual Statistics

Worker's compensation claims received by SORM were analyzed across a variety of dimensions, including body parts injured, nature of injuries, and day of the week in which injuries occurred. Each dimension was reported by fiscal year, and the information is also reported cumulatively for FY96-FY98. There have been no significant changes to the historical patterns for these dimensions since FY96.

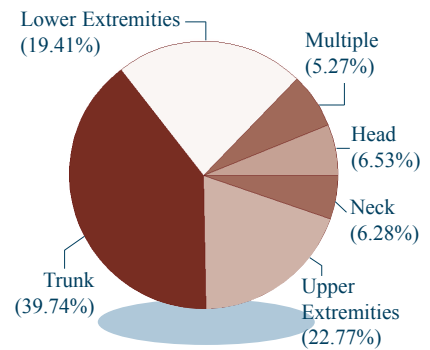
### BODY PART INJURED ▶

As in prior years, more than a third (38%) of all injuries reported in FY98 were to the trunk, followed by upper extremities (24%), lower extremities (20%), head (6.45%), multiple (6.26%), and neck (5.2%). Each category also represents the same percentage of total losses: 24% of FY98 losses were due to trunk injuries, etc.

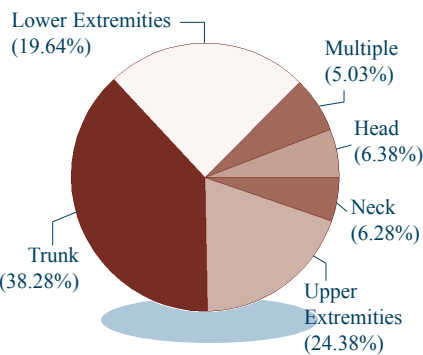
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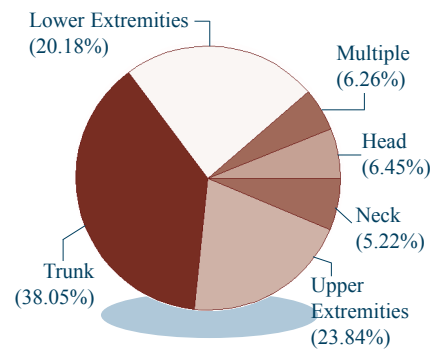
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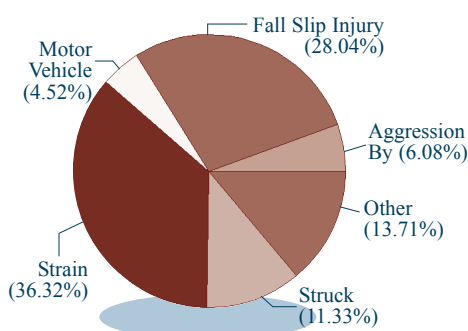
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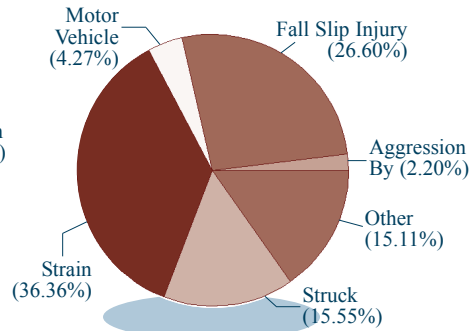
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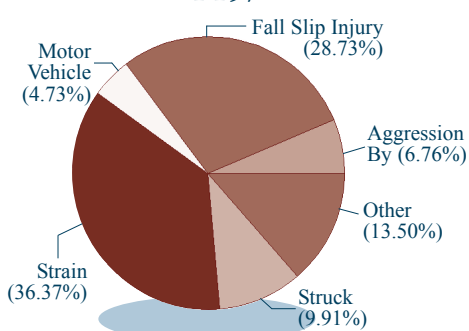
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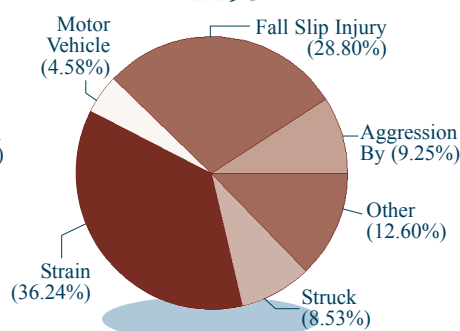
FY96



FY97



FY98



### ◀ CAUSE OF INJURY

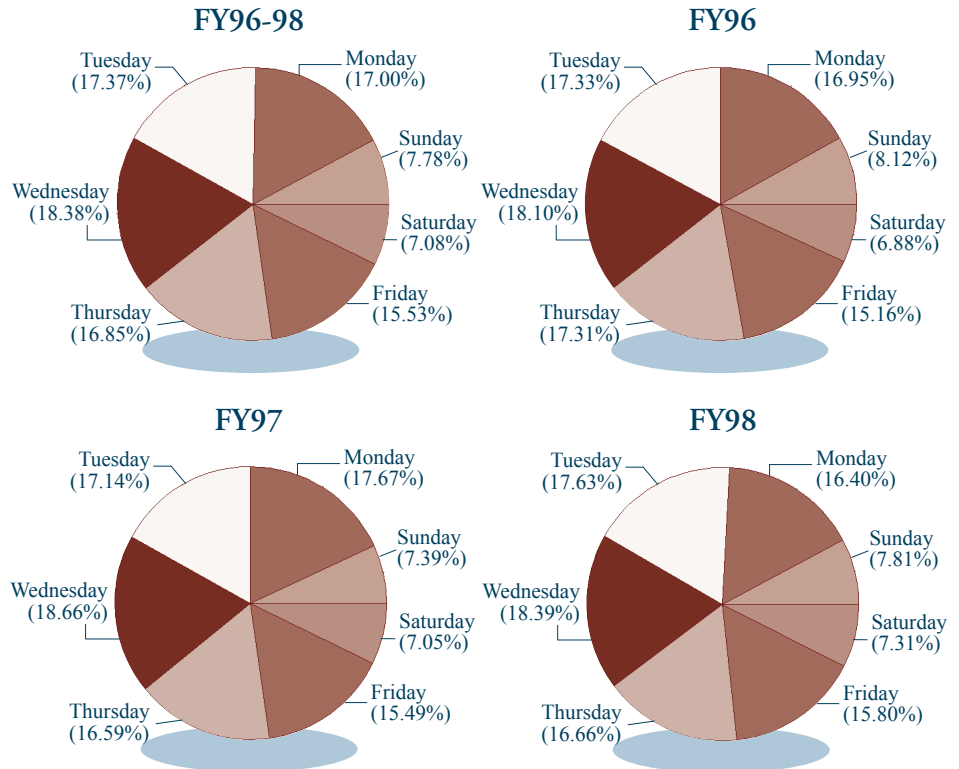
The most common causes of injury are strains (36% of the total in FY98), followed by falls/slips (29%), aggression (9%), employees being struck (8.53%), and motor vehicle accidents (4.5%). Almost 13% of all claims were classified as "other" in these pie graphs. The causes of injury included in "other" are burns/scalds/heat exhaustion, caught in between objects, cuts/punctures/scraps, striking, or rubbing. As with body parts injured, the percentage of costs by category is very close to the percentage of claims by category.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

## DAY OF INJURY ➤

While fewer injuries occur on Saturday or Sunday than on other days, the number of injuries on Monday or Friday are not significantly higher than Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. For the last three fiscal years, more injuries have occurred on Wednesdays than on any other day of the week.



## EASING INTO ERGONOMICS

SORM risk management specialists, in conjunction with their normal visits to state agencies, will be demonstrating to risk managers and safety officers how to use the ErgoEASER® software, an interactive computer program that helps evaluate and eliminate workplace hazards.

ErgoEASER®, which stands for Ergonomics Education, Awareness, System Evaluation, and Recording, was developed by the U.S. Department of Energy, Department of Labor/Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and the Department of Defense.

The software is designed to aid in identifying, evaluating, and

preventing work-related musculoskeletal disorders. Evaluating video-display terminal workstations and lifting task design, ErgoEASER® offers suggestions on how to address ergonomic hazards and reduce worker disabilities. The workstation analysis tool enables users to observe on screen the ergonomic effects resulting from specific workstation configurations. The tool also helps in determining configurations or dimensions that reduce ergonomic stresses.

To learn more about the training, call your SORM risk management specialist, or call Randy Unruh, manager of the Risk Assessment and Loss Prevention section, at (512) 936-1485.



## INVESTIGATING FRAUD CASES

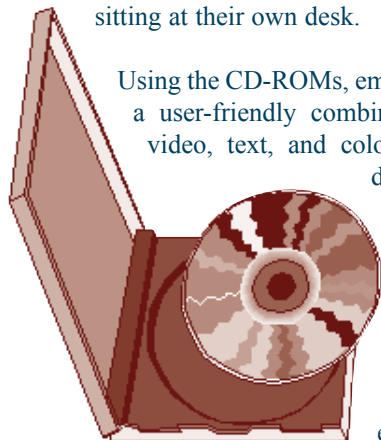
SORM created an Investigations Unit in October 1997 to investigate fraud in the workers' compensation system. Since then, 149 cases have been opened by SORM investigators through fiscal year 1998. Of those opened, 137 were a result of the FAIR (Fraudulent Activities Investigative Review) Task Force, which became active on Dec. 16, 1997. Four cases have been referred by SORM investigators to the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission for prosecution. The estimated amount of fraud on the four cases was \$40,178.

SORM investigators have submitted or assisted other agencies in the administrative prosecution of 10 cases for a total amount of \$9,927 in fraud.

A former state employee was indicted Aug. 4 in the Houston area on felony criminal charges stemming from an investigation conducted by SORM investigators. SORM alleges the claimant started working a second job two days after the alleged accident while receiving weekly workers' compensation income benefits.

# A NEW WAY TO TRAIN EMPLOYEES

The SORM Agency Outreach and Training section offers state agencies a new way to train employees in safety, health, and regulatory compliance issues. SORM will loan agencies a variety of computer CD-ROMs that allow employees to receive individualized training while sitting at their own desk.



Using the CD-ROMs, employees can navigate through a user-friendly combination of audio, full-motion video, text, and colorful graphics. Courses are divided into a number of logical sections, each with its own quiz and test, so information is easily understood. Each course is 30-45+ minutes long.

The discs also provide an easy way to document who has completed the training. The CD-ROMs allow trainers to define and set up curriculum, establish log-in procedures, and set up pre- and post-tests. The system will allow employee performance information to be collected and organized through a relational database, which can generate a number of record-keeping and tracking reports.

Agencies interested in using the CD-ROMs for training should contact Val McCandless, Agency Outreach and Training manager, at (512) 936-1460. The deadline for returning the discs to SORM will vary, depending on the number of employees being trained. The requested discs will be mailed to the agency, and then it is up to the agency to mail the training CD-ROMs back to SORM on time. For a detailed listing of what topics are covered in the CD-ROMs, call Val for a brochure.

CD-ROMs available from SORM include:

- Accident Investigation
- Safety Attitudes and Actions
- Back Safety
- Bloodborne Pathogens (health care version)
- Compressed Gas Cylinders
- Driving Safety
- Electrical Safety
- Emergency Planning
- Industrial Ergonomics
- Office Ergonomics
- Fall Protection
- Fire Prevention and Safety
- Forklift Safety
- Hand, Wrist, and Finger Safety
- Hand and Power Tool Safety
- Heat Stress
- Indoor Air Quality
- Ladder Safety
- Lock-Out/Tag-Out
- Materials Handling Safety
- Office Safety
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Respiratory Safety
- Right-to-Know/HAZCOM (health care version and cleaning and maintenance)
- Safety Housekeeping
- Safety Showers and Eye Washes
- Slips, Trips, and Falls
- Tuberculosis (health care version)
- Welding Safety
- General Laboratory Safety
- Planning for Laboratory Emergencies

Minimum computer system requirements: 486/66 or better; 8 MB RAM, 40 MB hard disk space; sound board; speaker system; 256-color VGA display; 1 MB RAM local video bus; CD-ROM drive (double speed or better).

## NEW EMPLOYEES SINCE JULY '98

**Jennifer Ruedas**, *Adjuster, Claims Operations*  
**Stacey Greer**, *Adjuster, Claims Operations*  
**John Poveda**, *Claims Supervisor, Claims Operations*  
**Randy Unruh**, *Manager, Risk Assessment & Loss Prevention*  
**Ronie Glenn**, *Administrative Support, Risk Assessment & Loss Prevention*  
**Pratap Borgaonkar**, *Accountant, Fund Accounting*  
**Alice Jimenez**, *Adjuster, Claims Operations*  
**Jennifer Hinojosa**, *Accountant, Fund Accounting*  
**Scott Hoopes**, *Trainer, Agency Outreach & Training*  
**Todd Wilson**, *Accounting Clerk, Fund Accounting*  
**Michael Tover**, *File Clerk, Claims Operations*  
**Raul Ortega**, *Statistician, Information Resources*  
**Michael Bates**, *Supervisor, Claims Operations*  
**Jennifer Dawson**, *Medical Bill Audit*  
**Stacy Greer**, *Adjuster, Claims Operations*  
**Dolores Mendez**, *Adjuster, Claims Operations*  
**Rachelle Sanchez**, *Governmental Liaison*  
**Jim Springer**, *Training Asst., Outreach & Training*

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## SORM UPCOMING EVENTS & TRAINING

### ADDITIONAL DUTY SAFETY OFFICER ORIENTATION

Austin-Bergstrom  
International Airport  
Austin, TX

Nov. 17, 1998, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Dec. 9, 1998, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Jan. 6, 1999, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Feb. 9, 1999, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

A one-day training session to provide basic tools and a practical approach for the day-to-day management of safety issues for additional duty safety officers. Contact Val McCandless at (512) 936-1460 to schedule your agency.

### ERGONOMICS & ERGOEASER®

Austin, TX  
Dec. 16, 1998, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

This course provides the safety officer and risk manager with the basic skills required to design a program to prevent one of the most prevalent and costly modern workplace health problems, "work-related musculoskeletal disorders" (WMSDs).

### BASIC TRAINING FOR CLAIMS COORDINATORS

2nd Tuesday of every month  
Austin, TX, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

### WORKERS' COMPENSATION WORKSHOP

Sponsored by Austin State Hospital  
Austin, TX  
Dec. 10, 1998, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Sponsored by Abilene State School  
Abilene, TX  
March 11, 1999, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

An overview of income and medical benefits, and the how and why of various forms required by the Texas Workers' Compensation Act are offered. Learn how to reduce your agency's work-related injury costs.

REGISTRATION FORMS will be mailed to your agency with times, locations, and arrangements.

Please contact: Val McCandless @ 512-936-1460 VSM@OAG.state.tx.us  
Leonard Zolondek @ 512-936-1561 LDZ@OAG.state.tx.us

Please let us know if you would like to continue receiving RISK★TEX. Fax your responses to: 512-472-0234.

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