



## INTEROFFICE MEMO

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD  
EMPLOYEE, CUSTOMER, & COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION

*Rely on us.*

TO: Commissioners Farmer, Brown, Cassidy, Cunningham, and Ernst

FROM: Christina Bennett, Human Resources Manager

DATE: November 2, 2009

RE: Quality Leadership Honorable Mention Award

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I am pleased to notify you that the Certification of Disability Management Specialists Commission (CDMSC) awarded EWEB an "Honorable Mention" in quality leadership for the effectiveness of our disability management program.

As you may know, EWEB has a strong coordinated approach to wellness, safety, and disability management. It is a way for EWEB to demonstrate our commitment to our employees and to assist them when they are faced with difficult circumstances such as injury or disability. It is also a way to reduce costs to EWEB and our ratepayers. Programs include our onsite wellness staff, health fair, fitness center, safety break event, and strong case management for injuries and disabilities. I encourage you to read the attached award application and press release for further context.

I would like to recognize the following dedicated employees who serve on the Safety and Health Team:

Karen DeChellis, Human Resources Administrative Assistant  
Becky Long, Safety Administrative Assistant  
Mark Maguire, Safety Coordinator  
Janet McClennen, Group Benefits Specialist  
Laurie Muggy, Senior HR Generalist  
Sherry Schumacher, Disability Program Coordinator

We also have on-site contract staff through Cascade Health Solutions who enhance our ability to be successful in managing health and disability. I would like to recognize them as well:

Cindi Feldman, RN,  
Lena Houston-Davisson, PT  
Mary Joy Sahara, RN

I am pleased to bring this award to your attention and make you aware of EWEB's success in this important area. If you have questions, would like further information, or would be interested in viewing the Health and Safety Metrics report, you can reach me at 685-7381 or [christina.bennett@eweb.org](mailto:christina.bennett@eweb.org).

Attachments: award application; press release  
c: Safety and Health Team members



CMDSC Quality Leadership Award Application  
Eugene Water & Electric Board  
July 2009

1. Briefly describe the structure of the organization's disability management program, including the number of employees and the type of organization.

EWEB is one of the oldest publicly owned utilities in the Northwest founded in 1911, and Oregon's largest customer owned utility. EWEB employs just over 500 employees in field/office professions that vary greatly, from substation workers to engineers, to customer service staff.

The disability management program evolved from the active management of occupational work injuries, and later expanded into the non-occupational arena. The program now encompasses workers compensation, STD/LTD, early return to work, FMLA/ADA, ergonomics, and a comprehensive wellness program. The Disability Program Coordinator manages the occ/non-occ disability caseload, and consults with HR staff members as needed on critical or complex cases.

2. Indicate the organization's practice in utilizing the services of Certified Disability Management Specialists or other credentialed professionals.

The Disability Program Coordinator holds a CPDM designation, and the DM program is largely successful because of the broad-based team approach to managing organizational health and productivity. The "Safety and Health" team includes a Sr Human Resources Generalist (SPHR), Safety Coordinator (CSP), Wellness Staff (onsite RN & PT services), Group Benefits Specialist, and administrative support. Other external business partners are also consulted when needed (MRO, insurance brokers, etc).

3. Explain how creativity and/or progressive thinking in the area of disability management has produced a successful outcome, either fiscally for the organization or in the quality of work life for the employee(s).

The company vision is "To be the best community-owned water and electric utility in the nation". One of our core values is stated as QUALITY OF WORK LIFE that "ensures a safe, healthy, and engaging work environment." This value provides the foundation for numerous programs and services offered in the utility, many of which are supported by an energetic and passionate safety & health team. As building blocks for our programs have been developed and refined, our attention remains on continuous improvement and best practices.

One of our latest initiatives included rolling out a comprehensive absence management program to the organization. Following executive management approval, manager/supervisors were 1) trained on the impacts of absence on organizational productivity, 2) supplied related

tools/resources, and 3) provided comprehensive absence reports for their respective areas, which will continue to be issued quarterly. We are anxious to monitor the impacts of the additional focus on absence, given the correlations to morale, teamwork, and productivity.

Another area of recent development has been a comprehensive safety and health team metrics report. This annual report includes program metrics from safety, workers compensation, disability/absence, group health and wellness. The report is shared with the Human Resources Manager, Executive Management, and serves as a resource document measuring trends and outcomes. For instance, all employees on disability leaves receive a satisfaction survey so we can collect ongoing feedback about their experience and consider opportunities for improvement.

As with most employers, musculoskeletal disorders and soft tissue injuries lead claim frequency. EWEB has tackled this issue through a combination of education/prevention campaigns, improved job tools/equipment, and early intervention services delivered by onsite wellness staff. The utility experience rating for calculating workers compensation insurance has dropped .36 pts in the last 5 yrs, which has decreased premiums by almost half. The organization is also a certified SHARP employer in Oregon, being recognized with the “Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program” award issued by Oregon OSHA.

Examples of additional programs include:

**Onsite Wellness Team (RN/PT)** – deliver onsite education classes, weight management program, smoking cessation, first aid treatment, physical therapy, vaccination clinics, health screenings, chronic condition support and medical counseling services/referral.

**Fitness Center** – the onsite facility includes cardio and weight training equipment and is available to employees, retirees, and family members. Programs offered include fitness center orientations, exercise classes, walking clubs, etc. The Fitness Coordinator helps employees determine personal interests and fitness goals, and develop a plan of action.

**Ergonomic Assessment Team (EAT)** – a cross section of volunteer employees have been trained to perform ergonomic assessments within their divisions; ALL employees receive a workstation evaluation, with more complex cases referred to the onsite physical therapist.

**Lactation Rooms** – private spaces dedicated to supporting nursing moms as they transition back to work are available in various locations around the utility.

**Health Fair** – held at the beginning of each year, this annual celebration attracts about 300 employees with vendors, medical screenings, healthy food, and many door prizes.

**Safety Break** – similar to the health fair, this recently created annual event celebrates our SHARP designation with an employee BBQ. Safety booths/information and presentations from executive management and board members reinforce the utility commitment to organizational safety. Awards are given to employees who are nominated “best of the best” for providing safety leadership in the organization.

**EAP** – the organization retains an EAP provider, and holds regular meetings to discuss organizational needs or emerging trends. Family/parenting issues are one of the leading employee concern categories, and a recent class was held during the noon hour titled “Parenting Teens”. The presentation included resource information, guidance and discussion.



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## **CDMSC Selects Eugene Water & Electric Board to Receive Quality Leadership Award Honorable Mention**

SCHAUMBURG, IL, October 15, 2009 – The Certification of Disability Management Specialists Commission (CDMSC) has selected the Eugene (Ore.) Water & Electric Board to receive a Quality Leadership Award Honorable Mention.

The 2009 Quality Leadership Award recipient and honorable mention were unveiled by the CDMSC at the National Business Group on Health's (NBGH) National Conference on Health, Productivity, and Human Capital, held in Philadelphia.

The Eugene Water & Electric Board is one of the oldest publicly owned utilities in the Northwest. With just over 500 employees it offers a broad disability management program that covers workers' compensation, short-term and long-term disability, early return-to-work, FMLA/ADA, ergonomics, and a comprehensive wellness program.

The organization takes a team approach to managing organizational health and productivity. Its Safety & Health Team consists of a disability program coordinator, senior human resources generalist, safety coordinator, wellness staff (including registered nurse, physical therapist, and fitness coordinator onsite), group benefits specialists, and administrative support.

The CDMSC presented the Honorable Mention to the Eugene Water & Electric Board for setting the example that a robust disability management program can be offered by employers of any size.

"We have worked very hard over the last five-plus years to put a much stronger focus on our employee wellness. I am very proud of our safety and health team for providing the underpinning of our success. I am also proud of our employees who have also stepped up to the challenge of making every day at work safe and productive," commented Randy Berggren, general manager of Eugene Water & Electric. "Their combined efforts have reduced our time lost and our workers' compensation costs while enhancing the long-term health of our employees. This proactive attitude and continuous commitment to innovation exemplifies our vision to be the best publicly-owned utility in the nation."

Each year, the CDMSC – the only independent, nationally accredited organization that certifies disability management specialists – honors a company or organization for demonstrating leadership in disability management. For more information on the CDMSC and its Quality Leadership Award, please see its website at [www.cdms.org](http://www.cdms.org).