

Managing the Special Needs of the Aging Workforce

How many of your workers are nearing retirement? The number of workers nearing retirement age in the next several years could approach 40% of the American workforce. Studies suggest that a majority of these workers do not wish to (or cannot afford to) retire at age 65. Is your workplace prepared for the “special needs” of the aging workforce?



The American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) has posted suggestions for updating the work environment to accommodate older workers:

- Improve illumination and add color contrast.
- Eliminate heavy lifting, elevated work from ladders and long reaches.
- Design work floors and platforms with smooth and solid decking while still allowing some cushioning.
- Reduce static standing time.
- Remove clutter from control panels and computer screens and use large video displays.
- Reduce noise levels.
- Install skid-resistant material for flooring and especially for stair treads, which helps reduce falls.
- Install shallow-angle stairways in place of ladders when space permits and where any daily, elevated access is needed to complete a task. This helps reduce falls.
- Utilize hands-free, volume-adjustable telephone equipment.
- Increase task rotation, which will reduce the strain of repetitive motion.
- Lower sound system pitches, such as on alarm systems, as they tend to be easier to hear.
- Lengthen time requirements between steps in a task.
- Increase the time allowed for making decisions.
- Consider necessary reaction time when assigning older workers to tasks.
- Provide opportunities for practice and time to develop task familiarity.

First Sun EAP has a dedicated Risk Management Team available to assist you with these issues. You can call any time for a free confidential consultation to discuss these or any workplace issues that affect the performance of your associates. Call toll-free at **1-800-968-8143** or in Greater Columbia at **(803) 376-2668**.

For more information on this topic as well as other risk management situations, please see our website at: www.firstsuneap.com.