HEALTHWATCH:
STRESS IN THE
WORKPLACE

The OSH Act explicitly requires that research be conducted to examine physiological, behavioral and motivational factors that affect employee safety and health [sections 20 (a) (1) and 20 (a) (4)]. NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) continues to assemble information on the effects of work-related stress and recommends actions that can be taken to prevent it. Due to the profound effects that stress has on employee health and the results reported from NIOSH research, there is an increased possibility of the development of a standard that addresses workplace stress.

Stress costs an estimated 150 billion dollars in absenteeism (500 million lost workdays), diminished productivity, compensation claims, health insurance and direct medical expenses. Eleven percent of all occupational disease claims are specifically attributed to workplace stress. By 1985, all compensation jurisdictions except Ohio recognized claims in which stress caused a physical disability (e.g. a heart attack due to job stress). With regard to either stress-related claims the National Council on Compensation Insurance has grouped states into four basic categories, based on the statutory or case-law guidelines within these jurisdictions. Several states have not been classified for lack of consistent statutes or case law. However, keep in mind that case law and statutes change frequently. States currently unclassified may become classified, and other states may change within the classifications.

Classifications of Compensation Jurisdictions Based on Treatment of Stress-related Claims

Not potentially compensable: Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma.

Accepted if stressor is a sudden, frightening, of shocking event: Illinois, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, S. Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia.

Accepted but require stress to be unusual or in excess of everyday life and employment: Arizona, Arkansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

May be accepted even if stress does not exceed everyday life or employment: California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, W. Virginia.

—Information provided courtesy of Intec, Waverly, PA