

Adding Insult to Injury: Analysis of Workers Comp Experiences at GE Lynn

IUE-CWA Local 201

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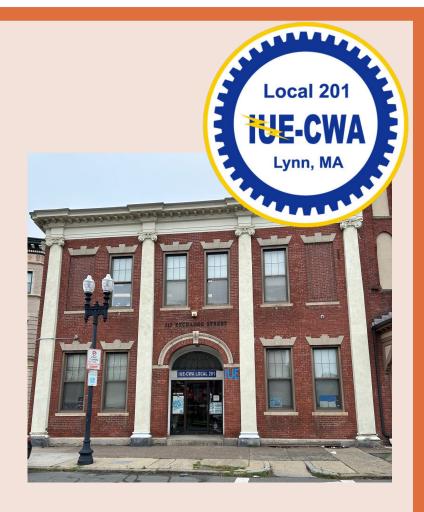
Background

IUE-CWA Local 201

- Founded in 1933
- Long organizing history in Lynn
- Represents a variety of workers in MA
- Has a Health and Safety Director and 9
 Safety Reps who do injury prevention, training, safety committee meetings, and shop floor support

Workers' Compensation

- Laws and policies vary by state
- Releases employers from legal liability for injuries/illnesses that happened at work
- Used to cover medical care and lost wages



Objectives

Help Local 201 better understand members' experiences with injuries on the job and the workers' compensation system to inform campaigns and contract negotiations

Report interview results in a report, create an educational booklet for workers and safety reps, and write a newspaper article for the Local 201 monthly news



Methods



BACKGROUND

- Met with former 201
 President and member
 of the labor council
- Met with attorney specializing in worker's comp law
- Literature review



INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Brainstormed topics with Local 201 and mentors
- Used OHIP resources
- Conducted 2 pilot interviews



RECRUITMENT

- Contacted members referred by union officers
 - Developed recruitment flyer



DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Conducted interviews virtually and in person
 - Analyzed themes

01

02

03

04

Recruitment



REQUIREMENTS:

COMP

ABOUT US

WE ARE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH INTERNS PARTNERED WITH THE IUE-CWA LOCAL 201. WE WANT TO GET TO KNOW YOU, AND HEAR ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH WORKPLACE INJURIES AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE'RE HERE TO HELP FIGHT FOR THE CHANGES YOU WANT TO SEE!

INTERVIEW SIGN-UP:



ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

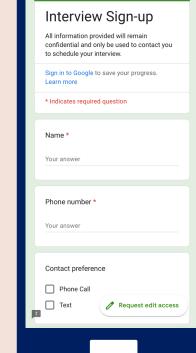
✓ HAD A PREVIOUS WORKPLACE INJURY

✓ HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH WORKERS'

PARTICIPATE IN A 30 MIN INTERVIEW

✓ WANT TO SEE CHANGE IN THE

CURRENT SYSTEM



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Conducting Interviews



17 interviewees

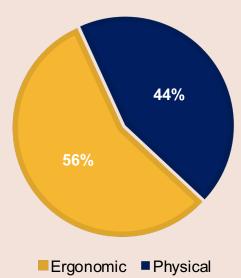
- 12 interviews over the phone
- 5 in person at the Union Hall
- Most were welders, machinists, and carpenters
- Injuries occurred between 2010-2024





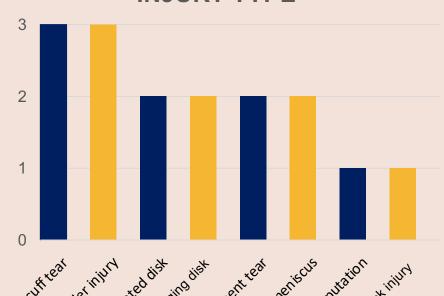
Results: Injuries





"I feel like my whole life changed because of it."

INJURY TYPE



Rotator cuff tear the mixted disk busing disk Torn near strong to the chindren tendent the mixted busing disk to the fine of the amount of the chindren tendent the chindren tendent the chindren to the chindren the chindren to the chindren the chindren to the chindren the chindr

Results: Injury Reporting and Medical Center



REPORTING

"I think people are afraid to report injuries because of the repercussions." - Pipe welder



TREATMENT DELAY

"They'll just massage you to death" - Electrician



DISRESPECTFUL

"its like you're getting treated like a criminal" - Machinist



CHANGE OVER TIME

"Anyone who does right by us doesn't last long" - Servicer

Results: Company Doctors and Independent Medical Examiners (IME)

LOW QUALITY CARE



"[physicians] treat you differently if you're a comp case"

- Union Officer

"the doctor they send you to doesn't have your interests in mind, they have the company's interests in mind"

- Miller



IME VALIDATES WORKER

"Out of several IME only one defended my legitimate workplace injuries" - Union Officer



IME DISCREDITS WORKER

"The IME wrote in his report that it looked like I was faking being in pain which wasn't true" - Machinist

Results: Third Party Administrator



COMMUNICATION

"Some people on the phone are so uneducated about the process they are put there to stop you."

- Machinist

"I don't feel like anyone cares. They ghosted me." – Carpenter



AGGRESSIVE TECHNIQUES

While processing their claim...

- 4 Felt someone was watching them to try and disprove their injury
- 1- Had family photos taken from social media to try and disprove their injury

"If you don't know your rights and you're new here, they're going to smoke you." – Miller



PAPERWORK

"I got a folder 4 maybe 6 inches thick" - Spot Welder

- 4 felt paperwork was confusing
- 3 Had trouble accessing their medical files/documents

INFO LEAKED

After processing their claim...

- 4 Felt more people had access to their personal information than was necessary
- 1 Had another employee's name on case related documents

Results: Return to Work



RUSHED TO RETURN

"[Company] tried to force me to work." – TIG welder on returning to work

"I felt like I was at the end of my rope" – Machine Repair Worker on pressure to keep working while injured



LACK OF ACCOMMODATION

"Wanted to find out what my stressors were at when I got back to work"

- Spot welder on returning from surgery without restrictions



ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

In response to injuries...

- 3 Safety meetings were held
- 1 Steps in process were changed
- 1 Stopped engaging in the task aggravating the injury



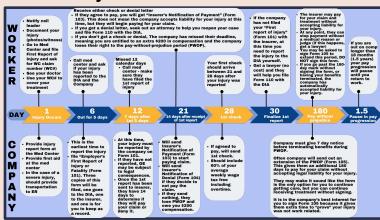
ENGINEERING CONTROLS

In response to injuries...

- 3 Machines were altered to prevent injury from reoccurring
- 1 Broken machine was replaced

Give Back Products

Injured on the Job Booklet



Example page of timeline for injured workers Additional sections include...

- · Know your rights
- · Return to work rules
- Resources and contacts
- FAQs

Interview Report and Analysis

Analysis of Workers Comp Experiences at GE Lynn

Background

IUE-CWA Local 201

The International Union of Electronic, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) Local 201 was founded in 1933 and had been at transformative part of the labor movement ever since. Today they represent workers at General Electric (GE) in Lynn, Lynn Wastewater Treatment Plant, Ametek Aerospace in Wilmington, Mk, Avis and Budget Rental in Boston, FleetLogis in East Boston, Saugus Librarians, and Staff of the North Shore Labor Council. This project focuses on the injury and workers compensation experiences of workers at GE in Lynn.

Workers at GE make commercial and military airplane and helicopter engines and parts. Workers do a vide variety of jobs including operating mechinery, welding, electrical work, assembling parts, more examples from interviews. As such, the Local 201 identifies and works to reduce safely hazards such as lifting heavy parts in avdivard positions, exposure to hornicals in coolants, exposure to flour horses over time, and fall hazards. The union has a full time Health and Safety Director who manages a team of nine safety representatives. This team is distributed fromognot the plant.

Workers Compensation

When injury and illness prevention falls and people become hurt or sick at work, they turn to worker's compensation systems in the U.S. began in the early 1900s as a way to release employers from legal liability for injuries on the job and to provide some financial support to injured workers. There have been many debates over the years about if and how workers' compensation systems should evolve but the basic structure has remained largely unchanged since the most 1900s, (Spieler, 2017). Each state has different laws and policies around workers' comp but all provide the following in varying amounts: coverage of some medical care, compensation for a percentage of lost wages, permanent total disability and permanent partial disability payments if applicable, and payments to dependents if a worker disc. The process of getting these benefits is often complicated because not all jobs are eligible for workers' compensation, workers may not file claims due to fear or discouragement, and claims can be contested or denied (Spieler, 2017).

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to help union officers better understand members' experiences with junies on the job and the workers' compensation system. Our findings will inform the union's bargaining points in the 2025 contract negotiations, future health and safety campaigns, and educational materials. To do this we will interview workers and have discussions with other subject matter experts. In addition to this report, we will update the injured on the Job pamplet that workers can reference when navigating the workers compensation system. Lastly, we will write an article for the Local 201 monthly newspaper to share the interview findings with members.

Newspaper Article



Successes and Challenges



SUCCESSES

- Recruitment support from union officers
 - Mentorship from site coordinators



CHALLENGES

- Not allowed into the plant
- Understanding nuanced workers comp laws
 - Time management

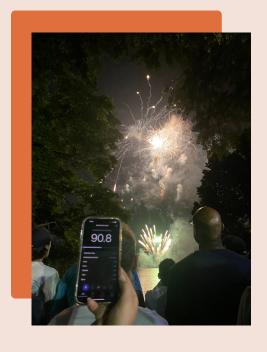


Next Steps

Unions can positively impact the workers' comp system through bargaining

- Injury reporting and response at the medical center
- Communication with the third party administrator
- The impact of the contract between the employer and the third party administrator
- Return to work process

Navigating workers' comp is a working condition and subject to bargaining!



Reflections





A big thank you to...



- Our interviewees who shared their stories with us
- Our hosts Carmen DeAngelis, Adam Kaszynski, and Jeff Cruz at IUE-CWA Local 201
- Our site coordinators Elise Pechter and Nancy Lessin
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