

Repetitive Strain Injuries in Station Agents



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Most people know to file a workers' compensation claim if they have an accident at work. However, injuries at work may also develop over a period of time due to repetitive trauma or an occupational disease. An occupational disease is a condition which results from the nature of the work that a worker performs. It must be the result of a distinctive feature of the work. People who perform repetitive work with their hands frequently develop occupational diseases as a result of their work. These conditions are also known as repetitive strain injuries. One of the most common repetitive strain injuries is carpal tunnel syndrome.

The New York State Workers' Compensation Board has established that the duties of New York City Transit Authority station agents can cause repetitive strain injuries and occupational diseases including carpal tunnel syndrome. The Board established one claim where a station agent testified that she worked eight hours a day in a booth and described job duties including keyboarding to encrypt Metrocards and entering information into a computer using a keyboard. This station agent developed steady progressive pain at her wrist and numbness of her right hand. Doctors, including an impartial specialist hired by the Board, found that there was a direct causal relationship between the agent's repetitive use stress syndrome and her employment.

In another case, a station agent was employed by the Transit Authority for twenty-three years. For the first eleven years, he handled tokens and carried buckets filled with tokens weighing between fifty and seventy-five pounds, two to four times a day, five to six days per week. For the next twelve years, his job duties included using a computer keyboard to enter dollar amounts and loading Metrocards into a machine to be encoded with the entered amount for eight hours per day, five or six days per week. The Board again found that the worker's carpal tunnel syndrome was related to his work.

The Workers' Compensation Board has found that station agents' repetitive use of their hands and wrists due to the use of the Metrocard encoding machines, handling paperwork and cash, typing, and counting money caused the development of carpal tunnel syndrome, cubital tunnel syndrome, DeQuervain's tenosynovitis, and trigger fingers.

Repetitive work activity can also cause injuries to other body parts including elbows, shoulders and the back and neck.

If you are a station agent who is experiencing pain, weakness, tingling, or numbness or any or any other problems with your hands or wrists or any other body part which you believe may be due to your work, you should consider filing a claim with the New York State Workers' Compensation Board, consulting with an occupational medicine specialist and calling Grey and Grey.