

Six Essential Considerations to Create a Successful Utility Warm-Up and Strengthening Program

There are numerous benefits to integrating a warm-up and strengthening program into your utility work. From a safety standpoint, when you integrate a program into your worker's daily routine, you reduce the risk of strain, sprain, or tear injury by improving range of motion, increasing blood flow, and decreasing tightness.

The safety benefits are not the only ones a utility company can expect to experience with an active warm-up and strengthening program. According to OSHA, for every dollar spent on prevention initiatives, they can expect a return of between \$2 to \$8.



If you are considering adding a warm-up and strengthening program, here are six tips to creating a successful program.



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1

Secure Buy-In/ Participation at the Top

Your warm-up and strengthening program will only be as successful as the effort put in by those that participate. When key stakeholders and company leaders buy-in and support the program, employees are shown to be more engaged and get better results. One effective way to show leadership buy-in is to have leadership actively participate in the program. If a company leader embraces and participates in the program when in the field, this reinforces the importance to employees.

2

Establish a Unified Approach

It is important that regardless of who is leading your team's warm-up and strengthening program, it be delivered consistently and effectively. Delivering the correct stretches in the proper form is essential to maximize prevention benefits. To ensure this happens, it is best to have several team members trained on what stretches should be delivered and how best to complete those stretches.

3

Balance Efficiency with Prevention Best Practices

Time is money so there can be a tendency to want to shorten any active warm-up being completed. However, injuries cost money as well. So it is important that when your team is getting ready to complete physically demanding work, they warm up their muscles to avoid strains and sprains. Use best-practice stretching and strengthening protocols to get the muscles warmed up in the most efficient means so your team can get to work quickly with a reduced risk of injury.



4

Evaluate Employee Work Tasks to Determine Necessary Warm-up

For the most effective warm-up and strengthening program, the physical demands of a work task must be evaluated and then the elements of the program be designed to address those specific demands. Within the utility industry, most tasks involve the back and shoulders, with a smaller number of tasks requiring knees and lower legs. If this is the case for your employees, your warm-up would need to include dynamic stretches for the muscles in those areas of the body.

5

Assess Frequency, Repetition, and Load

One common mistake seen when developing a warm-up and strengthening program is to only warm-up when employees are preparing for a physically strenuous task. Sprains and strains are equally experienced when a worker is completing what might be deemed a less physical task but on a more frequent occurrence. Because of this, your program should include elements that address task frequency, repetition, and load.

6

Incorporate Program into Existing Safety Checks

A great way to maximize participation and easily build a warm-up and strengthening program into your utility work is to simply incorporate it into existing safety practices. For example, if your company uses toolbox talks before beginning work, adding dynamic stretches as a warm-up is an easy way to reduce the risk of injury for your workers. Your program doesn't have to be a big production, but in fact, is most effective when it is woven throughout pre-existing practices.

Build a Customized Warm-Up and Stretching Program with Industrial Sports Medicine™

Briotix Health offers our utility clients customized warm-up and strengthening programs as part of our Industrial Sports Medicine™ (ISM) solution.

Our ISM solutions have proven effective in reducing the incidence and costs of musculoskeletal injuries and disorders by identifying and controlling job-related and personal health risks your employees' experience.

Our comprehensive ISM solution offers clients early discomfort management and care, job-specific physical conditioning, curriculum-based training and education, and one-on-one body mechanics coaching.

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