



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Workers' Compensation Board

2601 25th St SE, Ste 150

Salem, OR 97302-1280

503-378-3308

1-877-311-8061

www.wcb.oregon.gov

April 26, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the re-opening of WCB's offices to the public, I'd like to provide an update and an overview regarding our plans to move forward in the coming months, with a focus on our hearings and mediations. But first, our thanks.

It's been twenty-five+ months since Oregon's Governor Brown declared a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, all of you who rely on this forum, and who are participants appearing on behalf of your clients before WCB, have worked with us to do the incredible work of adjusting and shifting, as needed, to ensure that WCB could maintain our mission of providing timely and impartial dispute resolution at both our hearing and our board levels. We cannot begin to thank you all enough for the incredible work you have done.

We all rose to the challenge of stopping in-person events and shifting to remote hearings and mediations. Our next challenge will be to return to in-person proceedings while also retaining these remote options, such as the enhanced use of telephonic proceedings, and videoconferencing. Just as our current adaptive practices took time to develop, it will take some time for WCB to accomplish a smooth transition back to resuming in-person proceedings as our "default," while continuing to accommodate remote proceedings.

WCB's offices remain closed to the public through May 1, 2022. When Monday, May 2 arrives, our return to in-person hearings and mediations will be gradual and phased. For the first three months, until August 1, 2022, telephonic hearings and mediations will remain our default, videoconferencing will still be available, and there will be increased availability for the parties to request an in-person event. We will be implementing new hearing notices, specifying when a hearing or mediation will be conducted by telephone or by videoconference. PALJ Joy Dougherty will soon be sending out a communication to you, with specific information and instructions to guide you through these next few months.

As we move forward, we will continue to maintain a safe environment. Physical changes to our hearing/mediation facilities, such as Plexiglas barriers and enhanced air filtration, will remain available in all staffed and unstaffed facilities. On May 1, 2022, mandatory masking for in-person events at WCB will be lifted. By August 1, 2022, we will plan for a full return to the "default" of pre-pandemic in-person scheduling, including travel, while retaining remote options for those who wish to use them.

We acknowledge that some employees, parties and participants in our hearings and our mediations, as well as other visitors, may decide to continue to mask in indoor settings. Those wearing a mask include individuals who are at a high-risk for infection, those living with, or coming into contact with, others who are vulnerable, among many other personal reasons. We at

WCB will continue to support, without judgment, each individual's decision to continue wearing a mask. Further, while physical distancing guidance has been lifted, we should all continue to be mindful of each other's personal space and comfort as we approach each other inside WCB's locations.

It would be an understatement to say that the last two years have been challenging for everyone. We at WCB thank you. Your flexibility and patience as we have navigated this pandemic together has been greatly appreciated. I would humbly ask that each of us continue being patient, flexible and helpful with each other, as we adjust and reacclimate in this coming period as WCB's facilities re-open to the public. Please feel free to reach out to me, at connie.l.wold@wcb.oregon.gov or to PALJ Dougherty, at joy.m.dougherty@wcb.oregon.gov .

Gratefully,

Constance L. Wold

CONSTANCE L. WOLD (she/her/hers)
Board Chair
Workers' Compensation Board
2601 25th St. SE, Ste 150
Salem, OR 97302-1280
Phone: (503) 378-3308
Facsimile: (503) 373-1684