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MEETING NOTICE:

The Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation and Occupational Disease Disablement will meet at 2 p.m., Thursday, December 8, 2022, at 2410 Centre SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. See <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/Advisory-Council> for more information..

Employee Awards Announced at NMWCA Annual All Hands Event

By Aileen O'Catherine

The New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration (WCA) held its annual "All Hands" staff development and employee recognition event on September 19, 2022. The theme for the event was "The WCA is Totally RAD," a throwback to the 1980s, to celebrate the agency's 35th anniversary. Staff from the agency's six field offices traveled to Albuquerque for the event, which took place in the main office. Staff broke into assigned groups to participate in team-building activities at stations set up throughout the building. Teams participated in games that included a scavenger hunt and 1980s-style games such as PAC Man, an escape room, a mock trial, and an 80s trivia contest, among other challenges.

WCA Public Information Officer Diana Sandoval-Tapia coordinated the event. "Teams were deliberately created to mix staff amongst departments and field offices so staff had to mingle and create new working groups. We wanted staff to participate in a variety of team-building activities, so groups attempted challenges such as building a structure with spaghetti strands and a marshmallow, trivia games, even a cornhole challenge," Sandoval-Tapia said. "Groups had to work together as a team in events such as the spaghetti challenge to accomplish their task within a set time frame." There was a team award given to the group that earned the most points, but mostly, we hope we fostered a day of fun learning, problem solving and team-building skills."

Awards were presented for Bureau of the Year, Employee of the Year, and Manager of the Year. Service awards were presented for years of service with the agency.



*Compliance Bureau, 2022 Bureau of the Year
l to r: Jeffrey Romero, Lenny Fulton, Valerie Martinez,
Bureau Chief Trey Flynt,
Employee of the Year Barb Garcia,
Kellee Gaddis, Amanda Hall*

Compliance Officer Barbara Garcia was named the agency's "2022 Employee of the Year." Garcia has been with the agency for 16 years. Employer Compliance Bureau Chief Trey Flynt notes that Garcia always strives to do her best. "She goes above and beyond in explaining things to the public, and her knowledge of the Workers' Compensation Act is very high," Flynt said. "Since 2005, Barbara has been a model employee," he said.

The Employer Compliance Bureau was named the 2022 "Bureau of the Year." Bureau Chief Flynt had high praise for his team. "The compliance team works really hard to surpass the goals set for them and provides good service to the business owners of New Mexico," he said. Flynt praised the staff's teamwork. "They are always willing to jump in and assist each other and myself with anything that comes up," he said. "I'm very proud of their accomplishment in getting this recognition."

Manager of the Quarter Award

Santa Fe Field Office Manager Charlene Cde Baca is the WCA Manager of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2022.

Cde Baca has been with the WCA's Santa Fe office since 2005, having started as a business operations specialist. She was promoted to ombudsman in 2008 and was promoted to field office manager in 2014.

"I am completely honored to have been awarded manager of the quarter," Cde Baca said upon learning of the award.

"I can honestly say that I love my job and I love what we do. My staff is amazing, supportive and I am so proud to lead them," she said.

Cde Baca's nominator noted that she goes above and beyond for her staff, assisting them in any way possible.

"She is the most caring and giving manager I've ever had and I am grateful every day to come into the office knowing I have the best office manager anyone could ask for," said her nominator.



*Santa Fe Field Office
Manager Charlene Cde Baca*

Proposed WCA Rule Changes Reviewed by Public with Input from Stakeholders

The WCA has solicited and received suggestions from staff, stakeholders and the public for changes to the WCA Rules.

The WCA is proposing new rules regarding Part 1, General Provisions, Part 4, Claims Resolution (being repealed and replaced), Part 5 Enforcement and Administrative Investigation, Part 6, Judicial Selection, Part 7 Payments for Health Care Services (being repealed and replaced), Part 12 Uninsured Employers' Fund and Part 13, Controlled Insurance Plans.

For a copy by e-mail, contact the WCA General Counsel Office at gc.clerk@state.nm.us. For a copy by mail, please submit a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your request to WCA General Counsel Office, 2410 Centre Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Comments should be sent to WCA General Counsel Office, 2410 Centre Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106 or gc.clerk@wca.nm.gov.

A public hearing was held on Friday, October 21, 2022. Comments made in writing will be taken into consideration.

Written comments on the rule changes will be accepted until 5 p.m. on October 28, 2022.

Proposed rules can be found on the WCA Website at <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/WCA-Rules-and-Statutes>.

NM Workers' Comp. Adm. Quarterly Bulletin

Robert E. Doucette, Jr., Director
Diana Sandoval-Tapia, Public Information Officer
Aileen O'Catherine, Public Relations Specialist

The Bulletin is electronically published in January, April, July and October by the Public Information Office of the New Mexico Workers' Compensation Administration. The Bulletin is available free of charge. Send changes of e-mail address and requests to receive the Bulletin to Diana Sandoval-Tapia in the Public Information Office, New Workers' Compensation Administration, WCA-PIO@wca.nm.gov.

Suggestions for articles are welcome. Call Diana Sandoval-Tapia at (505) 841-6052.

Recent issues of the Quarterly Bulletin can be viewed on the Internet at <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/NMWCA-Publications>.

What is the Advisory Council?

The Advisory Council on Workers' Compensation and Occupational Disease Disablement is a task force created by statute, comprised of six members, three representing workers and three representing employers. The primary role of the Council is to advise the governor and legislature on the status of the workers' compensation system in New Mexico. The Advisory Council is required to meet at least twice annually. Scheduled meetings of the Council are announced on the WCA website, <https://www.workerscomp.nm.gov/Advisory-Council>.

WCA All Hands (cont'd.)

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The agency presented its “Manager of the Year” award to Richard Adu Asamoah, Ph.D., of the Economic Research and Policy Bureau.

“I’m pleased to be able to congratulate Dr. Richard on being named WCA Manager of the Year,” said Deputy Director Leigh Martinez. “He works hard to promote a cohesive, collegial team and leads them by example through his hard work, proficiency and expertise. The WCA is lucky to have him on our team.”

Awards also went to staff for years of service. Charlene Roberts has been with the agency for 30 years in the Farmington field office. Roberts began work at the WCA on April 13, 1992 as

the Northwest Regional Administrator, which then became the Farmington Field Office Manager. “I have enjoyed working at the WCA,” Roberts said. “It has all been good years, even in the “growing” stages. I feel honored to have worked for the State of New Mexico Workers’ Compensation Administration,” she said.

The WCA recognized several other of its staff members for their years of service to the agency. Service award recipients included Kyley Hernandez, 15 years; Sabrina Bludworth and Rinda Dewhirst, 10 years; Megan Aragon, Judge Tony Couture, Jaime Gutierrez, Doreen Hamlin, Paul G. Martinez and Priscilla Padilla, each with five years.



*Farmington Field Office
Manager Charlene Roberts*

Employee of the Quarter Award

The WCA Employee of the Quarter for the third quarter of 2022 is General Counsel Paralegal Rinda Dewhirst.

Dewhirst has been with the agency for 10 years.

General Counsel Michael Holt nominated Dewhirst for the award, saying she is dedicated to her position and can be trusted with complex legal tasks.

“She performs her work with class, poise and a kind disposition toward everyone,” Holt said. She was also praised for playing a lead role in the rule-making process, and for handling IPRA and constituent responses in a timely and thorough manner. Holt noted Dewhirst brings a steady and warm presence to the agency.

“It’s nice being recognized for my

work ethic my parents instilled in me,” said Dewhirst. “I love working in the General Counsel Office because there’s always something new that pops up on a daily basis, so my work definitely doesn’t get monotonous.”

“Rinda has been for many years the glue that has held the Office of General Counsel together,” said Holt, “regardless of who has been the Director or General Counsel, or while those posts were absent.”

2023 Proposed Changes to Health Care Provider Fee Schedule and Billing Instructions

The proposed 2023 Health Care Providers Fee Schedule and Billing Instructions is currently available for viewing and download from the agency website. Public comment for the 2023 Fee Schedule is open.

Written comments will be accepted from 8 a.m. Wednesday, October 12 through 5 p.m. Monday, November 14, 2022.

Send comments to the attention of the WCA General Counsel, by email to gc.clerk@wca.nm.gov, by fax to 505-841-6813 or by U.S. mail to WCA Office of General Counsel, PO Box 27198, Albuquerque, NM 87125-7198. The WCA director will take all comments into consideration.

The WCA will hold a public hearing on the proposed changes at 10 a.m.,

Thursday, November 3, 2022, virtually via the Zoom platform.

Visit the Healthcare Provider page on the agency’s website for information on how to access the link. <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/Healthcare-Providers>

2022 Annual Report Now Available Online

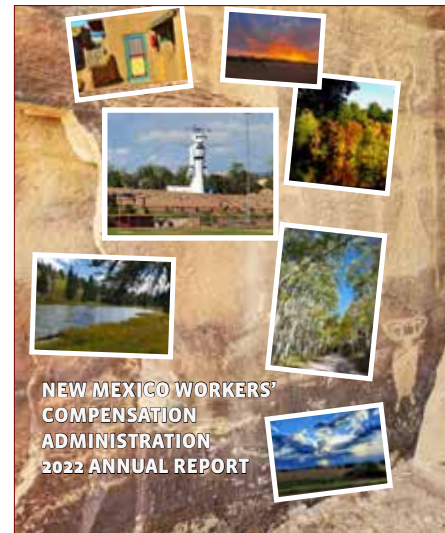
By Aileen O’Catherine

The WCA’s 2022 Annual Report is now available online at the agency website. The report highlights the WCA’s successes and places where improvements can be made. Several highlights from the report include:

- The number of both First Reports of Injuries or Illness (FROIs) and Subsequent Reports of Injuries (SROIs) submitted to the WCA continued to decline in 2021, a trend that began in 2019.

- There were 38 work-related fatalities reported to the WCA in 2021, representing the lowest fatality rate (fatalities per 100,000 covered workers) -- 4.99 -- since 2017.
- Pandemic-related fatalities reported to the WCA increased by 10 in 2021 compared to 2020.

To request a printed report, email WCA-PIO@wca.nm.gov, or find it online at <https://workerscomp.nm.gov/NMWCA-Publications>.



2022 Annual Report



HOLIDAY CLOSURE

The Workers’ Compensation offices in Albuquerque and all its field offices will be closed on the following upcoming holidays:

Veterans Day, Friday, November 11

Thanksgiving, Thursday and Friday, November 24 - 25

Christmas, Monday, December 26

New Year’s Day, Monday, January 2

MLK Day, Monday, January 16

New Mexico Workers’ Compensation Administration Offices:

MAIN OFFICE

Location & Main Mail Address:

2410 Centre Ave. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106-4190

Alternate Mailing Address:

PO Box 27198
Albuquerque, NM 87125-7198

Phone Numbers:

Phone: (505) 841-6000
In state toll-free phone:
1-800-255-7965
Fax Clerk of the Court:
(505) 841-6060
Director’s Fax: (505) 841-6009

Regional Offices

Farmington:

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Fax: (505) 599-9753

Hobbs:

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Hobbs, NM 88240
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Las Cruces, NM 88007
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Fax: (575) 524-6249

Las Vegas:

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Roswell, NM 88201
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In state toll-free phone:
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Fax: (575) 623-0078

Santa Fe:

Aspen Plaza
1596 Pacheco, St. #202
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Phone: (505) 476-7381
Fax: (505) 476-7390

WCA Helpline-Hotline: (toll free in New Mexico)

1-866-WORKOMP 1-866-967-5667

WCA Website:

<https://workerscomp.nm.gov>