

# WORKERS' COMPENSATION NEWS

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### UPDATE ON THE BOARD'S WEB PORTAL

The Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) is pleased to note that use of the WCB portal is continuing to increase, and that several new features are in development. We thank all portal users for bringing their suggestions, and their problems, to our attention. Improvements and enhancements are primarily driven by our customers.

Hearing Requests filed through the portal have continued to increase, with recent trends showing about 30 percent of all hearing requests coming via the portal. In the first two weeks of July, however, the percentage jumped to 44 percent. Practitioners who use the portal can save time in processing paper forms, and save money with reduced postage costs. Furthermore, you will get immediate acknowledgment from WCB that your request has been received.

The percentage of requests for Board Review via the portal lags a little behind Hearing Requests. One reason may be that some portal users have not activated the "Board Review" notifications on their portal contact page. These notifications can be activated by checking the Board Review boxes on the "contact detail" tab. When activated, service of requests can be accomplished through the portal, saving time and postage costs for everyone.

Some of you may be concerned that when using the portal, service to some parties (such as the employer) must still be done by mail, creating a little confusion in processing. As a reminder, the portal will always notify you when a party is not a portal user, and that conventional methods of service must be done.

We are actively pursuing expansion of the portal to include the following features:

- Response to issue
- Electronic service of hearing notices
- Change of counsel
- Briefing extension requests
- Settlement documents

**The time frame for implementation of these projects is still to be determined, but we will keep you informed and seek your input as we move forward.**

**Some things to remember and consider in your use of the portal:**

- If a staff member leaves your firm, please delete them from your portal account (as “users” and “contacts”) to prevent WCB portal notifications from going to a closed e-mail box. Those e-mails will bounce back to us as “undeliverable.” Just because an e-mail box is no longer active in your computer system, it is not automatically removed from your portal account. Likewise, if you have new staff, please update your portal account.**
- Whenever possible, please utilize the pre-loaded database in the employer, attorney, insurer, and TPA boxes when making your request. Doing so will likely mean you have fewer paper copies to send, as our database can confirm that the other parties are also portal users.**
- If you have concerns that you may have missed a portal notification from WCB, one place to check is the “contact history” tab (in your “contacts” page).**
- The “WCB Case Status” screen is also a good place for current information on a case.**

**For questions about the portal, contact us at [portal.wcb@state.or.us](mailto:portal.wcb@state.or.us), or 503-378-3308. We are available for training & technical help, including on-site training at your office. Don't hesitate to ask!**

### **E-Mail “Filings”**

**We have noticed a recent increase in requests for hearing filed by e-mail to our box at [request.wcb@state.or.us](mailto:request.wcb@state.or.us) As a reminder, an e-mail request per OAR 438-005-0046(1)(f)(B) requires that you:**

**“Attach an electronic copy of a completed Workers' Compensation Board "Request for Hearing Form," or a completed request for Board review, or a completed request for extension of the briefing schedule, or a completed request for waiver of the Board's rules, or a completed Board "Response to Issues Form." These attachments must be in a format of Microsoft Word 2000® (.doc, .txt, .rtf), Adobe Reader® (.pdf), or formats that can be viewed in Internet Explorer® (.tif, .jpg).”**

**Thus, an e-mail request for hearing or review must include the required attachment.**

**In addition, briefing extensions/motions for waiver of Board rules can also be filed via e-mail. Please refer to OAR 438-005-0046(1) for more information.**

### **Notice of Settlement**

**Practitioners are accustomed to notifying an Administrative Law Judge, or the Judicial Assistant, when a pending hearing request has been resolved by a settlement. Prompt notification to the Hearings Division opens up time on the hearing docket for other cases, and reduces travel and interpreter expenses.**

**The same principle applies to cases pending Board Review. Whenever a pending case has been settled in principle, the practitioners should immediately notify Karen Burton, WCB's executive secretary, at (503) 934-0123 or [karen.burton@state.or.us](mailto:karen.burton@state.or.us). Once notified, the Board can suspend its review and focus its attention on unresolved disputes. If the settlement does not come to fruition, the parties can notify the board and the case file can be returned to the members for review.**

## SAVE THE DATE :

As The Bench Bar Forum will be held on October 24, 2014 this year from 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm at the Oregon Gardens and we plan to have 2 hours of ethics credits and 1 hour of child abuse reporting.

The date was moved from the usual November time frame due to the BOG meeting and internal CLE's at the WCB and SAIF.