

LAWRENCE DYER'S Injured Worker Horror Story

“I’ve lost my job, my health insurance and my marriage. The insurance company took away my doctor, stopped physical therapy and has kept me waiting for surgery. Soon, I’ll lose even my temporary disability support. I fear I’ll end up sleeping under a bridge.”



About Me: My name is Lawrence Dyer. I’m 45 years old and I live in San Jose.

My Job and What Happened: I’ve been a Journeyman Electrician for 21 years. I loved my job, and gave 100% all the time. I was working for St. Francis Electric, installing power and lighting for new football fields at area high schools. I was pulling wire through hundreds of yards of conduit day-after-day. On Dec. 2, 2004, my left hand went numb. I also had pain in both wrists and right hand. I reported the injury to my supervisor, but it took two weeks for them to file the injury report. I continued working, worsening my injury. The company then denied my claim. But I was told I could see a doctor approved by the company. I found the one closest to my home. He diagnosed me with carpal tunnel syndrome in both hands and a pinched nerve in my elbow. He prescribed physical therapy to see if we could avoid surgery. I went twice a week to therapy, but after 24 visits, the insurance company cut me off. I eventually had surgery on my left elbow, but was denied any therapy after the operation. Even with multiple injuries, I can only get 24 therapy visits, even though I need many more. I still have 20% numbness in my hand; with therapy,

it might have healed completely. I’ve been waiting a year-and-a-half for treatment on both of my hands. Recently, the insurance company kicked my doctor off their approved list. I waited months to get another doctor, who also recommended therapy, but the insurer again denied it. A state-appointed Qualified Medical Examiner agreed I need therapy, which was still denied. I most likely need surgery on both hands. I can have only one hand operated on at a time, so I doubt I’ll be able to get both done before my temporary disability is cut off.

What this has meant to my life: I had a great life until I was injured at work. Now, I have little strength or grip in my hands. I can’t even use a pair of scissors without pain, or turn on the shower faucets. I can’t mow the lawn, drive very far, or even run a vacuum cleaner. I have trouble just doing the dishes. I can’t work, and I’ve lost nearly all my income. I was earning \$43 an hour plus benefits before my injury. I’ve lost my health insurance; I can’t even afford to get my teeth cleaned. My pension contributions have stopped. My rent is \$2,000 per month. I’ve had to rent out rooms to make my rent. Soon I fear I’ll only be able to afford to sleep under a bridge.

How the Governor’s Workers’ Comp Law Affects Me

How Workers’ Comp was supposed to help me: I was to receive medical treatment, but I’m still waiting for needed treatment for my hands. It’s been a year-and-a-half and will likely be another six months. The insurance company took away my doctor after they sent me to him. I’m going to lose temporary disability at the end of 2006, and I doubt I’ll have time to get both hands fixed before then. If I have only one good hand, I won’t be able to keep my old job. I won’t be able to compete with others who have two good hands. I won’t be able to use a job displacement voucher because I’ll have no income. What am I to do?

www.VotersInjuredatWork.org

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