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## Creation Windows, Inc.: A proactive approach to safe work

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### **Case 1: Creation Windows Inc. — A proactive approach to safe work**

*Creation Windows Inc.* (Sheley, 1995) In 1989 this Indiana manufacturer of doors and windows for mobile homes was averaging 200 workplace injuries per year in a workforce of 400 people. In other words, each year every second person was injured. After tracking how and where injuries happened, the company found that repetitive motion injuries were the most prevalent. Even worse, every injured person the company sent to a physician ultimately went into surgery.

At Creation Windows the production lines require workers to twist their hands and wrists a great deal, with many pinching motions. The consultants hired by the company found that even though some reaches were awkward, employees didn't realize they were hurting themselves.

The company took a proactive approach. A long-term safety and health education programme was launched. The firm supplied workers with gloves and wrist supports, and stopped using certain production techniques. It also replaced its man-sized tools with smaller ones for female workers. Further changes included job rotation, worker-management safety committees, and an awards programme.

Creation Windows also established a reporting system that catches most injuries early. For those who are injured, there is a new emphasis on conservative treatment, with surgery an option only where improvement is insufficient. And personal contact between HR representatives and injured workers helps to educate employees about their treatment and ensure that appointments are kept.

With this new programme, injuries plummeted. In 1994, the number of work-related repetitive motion injuries was less than 20 per cent of the 1988 figure. Creation Windows also got out of the assigned risk pool for workers' compensation insurance. The programme has boosted morale among employees and brought the turnover rate down.

Our next case provides an example of how occupational health and safety can be treated as part of an overall environmental awareness programme.