

Partnerships Building Iowa's Workforce

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On the Cover: Special thanks to Bob Jackson (upper left), Harvey Andrews (upper right) and Inkham Dara (bottom).

From the Director...



Richard V. Running
Director,
Iowa Workforce
Development

WELCOME TO THE ANNUAL REPORT for Iowa Workforce Development, the agency responsible for expanding and improving Iowa's workforce.

If that sounds like a big job, that's because it is. Meeting Iowa's workforce needs is too big a challenge for government alone to tackle, much less one government agency.

Developing bonds with public and private partners is the only way Iowa Workforce Development can ensure our state will have the workers needed for expanding and new businesses. That's why the theme of partnership is the guiding principle at this agency.

When you walk into an Iowa Workforce Development Center, you'll find representatives from a melange of public and private groups involved in the workforce industry. Co-locating offices makes it easier for customers to access services without driving all over town, or all over the county, and more importantly, helps us coordinate the assistance we provide. Whether it is working with local community colleges, coordinating activities with local economic developers or helping elderly

Iowans find work with Green Thumb, you'll find that Iowa Workforce Development provides the common link between a number of organizations.

That's why partnership is the theme of this year's Annual Report. It's only through the help we receive from our fellow state agencies and our links with local public and private organizations that we can tackle Iowa's workforce needs. Fostering and building on those partnerships is one of the central focuses of Iowa Workforce Development.

In this Report, you'll read about some of the many partnership activities taking place at Iowa Workforce Development.

On behalf of my fellow workers at Iowa Workforce Development, I want to thank all of the partners and their staffs for the assistance they provide. By working together, we can ensure that Iowa will have the workforce it needs for tomorrow and the new millennium.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard V. Running". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Year in Review

An Already Tight Labor Market Gets Tighter

HOW CAN AN ALREADY ROCK BOTTOM unemployment rate go even lower? It's not an easy question to answer, but that was the trend for Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 which ended on June 30, 1999. The average seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for Iowa dropped to 2.7 percent, which was astoundingly lower than the 2.9 percent recorded in Fiscal Year 1998. In comparing those two years, the labor force was up over 10,000 from the previous year, while the numbers employed grew over 14,000, and the number unemployed fell by just over 3,700. In July 1999, Iowa posted record seasonally adjusted employment of 1,554,600 and in May of 1999 a record for the lowest level of unemployment was recorded at 41,600.

Growth By Sectors

Non-farm employment totaled 1,465,800 during FY 1999, 40,400 more than FY 1998. This represents a gain of 2.8 percent. The fastest growing segment continues to be services, where 13,600 new jobs were created during FY 1999, a gain of 3.7 percent. Services posted employment of 385,400 which amounts to over one out of every four non-farm workers in the state.

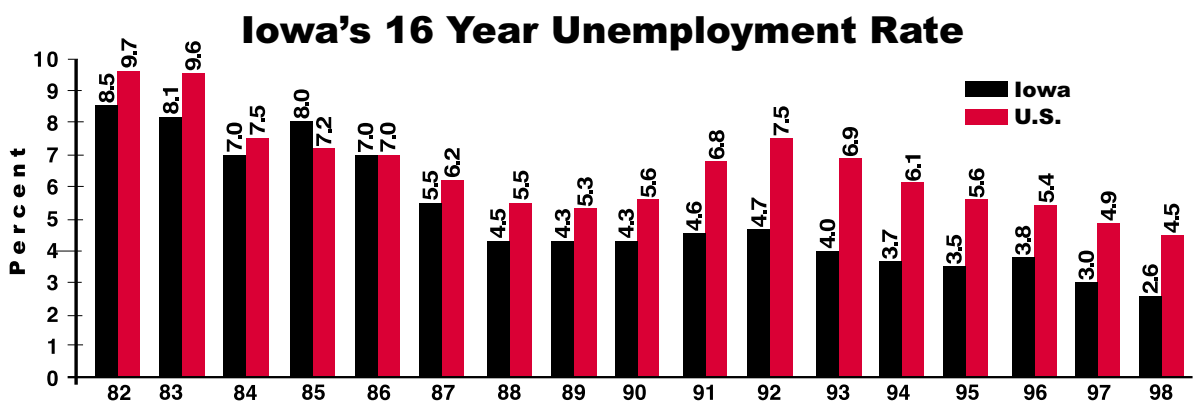
After services is retail trade, which grew by

7,300 during FY 1999, a gain of 2.8 percent. Currently there are 271,400 jobs in the retail trade sector. Close behind retail trade was manufacturing which added 7,000 new jobs in FY 1999 for a total of 264,300. The percentage gain for manufacturing was 2.7 percent, just under that of retail trade.

The 1990s have represented something of a comeback for manufacturing in Iowa following sharp declines in the 1980s. The number of manufacturing jobs did not equal or surpass the previous record high of 264,500, set in June of 1978, until July of 1998.

The largest percentage gains came from lumber, wood and furniture at 10.2 percent; business services at 8.6 percent; chemicals and allied at 5.8 percent; transportation, communication, & public utilities at 5.4 percent; transportation equipment at 5.3 percent. Lumber accounted for almost the entire gain in its category, and trucking and warehousing gains were almost half of its category.

Declines were recorded in primary metal; apparel and other textiles; railroad; and depository institutions. However, the largest decline was recorded in farm and garden machinery manufacturing, a result of the falling commodity prices and subsequent layoffs at farm machinery plants.



SOURCE: Iowa Workforce Development

Workforce Issue Draws Attention

LAST YEAR THE ATTENTION TO Iowa's workforce needs grew in intensity and the trumpet to action blew louder.

In January 1999, the Iowa Business Council issued a report entitled "Iowa's Economic Future: People, Knowledge and Know-How."

The report's recommendations included these items: Helping underutilized populations enter the workforce to expand the pool of workers; Upgrading skills to move workers to higher paying jobs; Developing programs to retain productive workers; and Investing in amenities to attract workers.

The report concludes with a call to partnership.

"Indeed the success of Iowa in fully utilizing its resources will be a strong, successful partnership between employers, educators, employees and our government."

Governor's 21st Century Workforce Council

In February 1999, Lt. Governor Sally Pederson convened the Governor's 21st Century Workforce Council to develop action steps to meet Iowa's most immediate workforce needs.

The Council was composed of Iowans representing employers, educators, nonprofit groups and labor and worker organizations. After meeting and developing strategies, the

Council gathered public input during a series of community forums held around the state.

The Council's recommendations centered around four major areas: Recruiting Iowa's Workforce; Retaining Iowa's Workforce; Preparing Youth for the Future; and Enhancing Iowa's Workforce.



Partnership was again a common theme. "Addressing our labor shortage is a problem that's too big to leave to government alone," Lt. Governor Pederson noted. "Meeting our workforce needs is going to take action on the part of

both public and private organizations. Everyone has a part to play from students to teachers to employers to government to private workers."

These reports and the groups that put them together are examples of the types of partnerships needed in Iowa to address the state's labor and skills shortages.

For both the Iowa Business Council and the Governor's 21st Century Workforce Council, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) played a key role in coordinating the final reports.

Those are two examples of IWD's involvement at the highest level in the strategic planning underway to improve Iowa's workforce. This Annual Report outlines many other examples of the partnerships formed between Iowa Workforce Development and other groups and organizations.

Staff & Partners Make the Difference at Workforce Development Centers

THE STAFF IOWANS FIND AT IOWA Workforce Development Centers are the backbone of our organization. In today's changing times, the roles staff play are shifting to information brokers, facilitators, coaches, and liaisons in the community. In short, they are wearing more hats.

Staff and partners are hosting and participating in job fairs across the state, working with schools, offering new classes to our customers, forming rapid response teams to help workers dislocated from company layoffs or mergers, and the list goes on.

Better Technology

We're also upgrading the level of technology and computerization. This effort has been

made easier by partnerships with other agencies in communities like the Workforce Development Center in Council Bluffs. Partners located at the Center have access to a free computer lab for training to keep staff up-to-date on new technology. This was made possible by Iowa Western Community College who houses the lab filled with computers provided by another partner, the Department of Human Services.

Our staff makes the difference in bringing technology and resources right into the communities of our customers. New systems let us bring computers and Internet connections into all our centers across the state to let customers help themselves.

Customers have easy access to word pro-



cessing and software tools to prepare resumes, cover letters and thank you letters to help the job seeker through the entire job search process. Customers can use the Internet to submit resumes and conduct job searches on Iowa's Job Bank, an affiliate of America's Job Bank, and Iowa Jobs, found on the IWD Home Page. Job seekers searching specifically for professional positions that pay over \$30,000 annually can take advantage of the new Smart Career Move web site. *(See story on next page for more details.)*

Customers can also access a variety of labor market trends such as the fastest growing industries in Iowa and what occupations will be in highest demand at their local Centers.

Technology is playing a growing part in our services to help Iowans help themselves. But technology is not replacing staff, rather it is freeing them up to assist customers in new ways.

Burlington Center

For example, the Burlington Workforce Development Center reaches out to over 700 eighth graders in the Des Moines County School system with Project CAPE (Career Awareness Partners in Education). This pro-

gram pulls together local businesses, chambers of commerce, Job Training Partnership providers, the Area Education Agency, Des Moines County Schools, the Iowa State University Extension, and a school in Western Illinois to help students better connect school and work and future career choices.

The "Career Day" in the fall provides students information on careers and education needed for specific occupations, a workplace style show and an opportunity to learn first-hand from an employer-based panel about what it takes to get a job.

Coordinator Jan Monville of Iowa Workforce Development has been coordinating this effort from its beginning eight years ago. "If I didn't have lots of helpers [Partners], I could never pull it off," Monville said. "It started with one school and now includes all schools in the county."

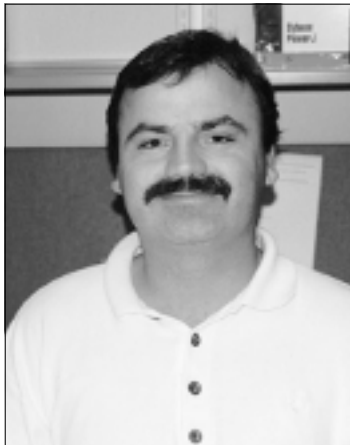
Those are some of the changes we are bringing to our customers. But there's more to our offices than computers and hi-tech software. You'll still find a face, voice and handshake is there when you need it. A personal touch along with technology is still important to most Iowans. With the help of our partners, we hope to be able to provide the best of both worlds.

Workers at the Council Bluffs Workforce Development Center stay up-to-date on the latest computer technology through a great partnership effort. The computers come from the Dept. of Human Services and Iowa Western Community College provides the room. All partners at the Center have access to this excellent training facility.

Recruiting on the Internet and Face-to-Face

THE INTERNET IS BECOMING THE job bulletin board of our day, especially for younger workers more acclimated to using the world wide web. Iowa's Human Resource Recruitment Consortium uses the internet as its main tool to market Iowa to college graduates who have left the state. The Consortium is a public to public partnership between the Iowa Department of Economic Development which coordinates the site in conjunction with Iowa Workforce Development and a public to private partnership with the 57 employers who post jobs on the site.

In addition to listing jobs, the site showcases the advantages of living in Iowa—the quality of life, superior education system and competitive cost of living to mention a few.



Jeff Cunningham is glad to be back in Iowa

to a job as a computer consultant at Cap Gemini in Des Moines. "Iowa is a much better place for my family," he notes. "I'm glad to be back."

Jeff Cunningham left Iowa for Denver and a better paying job. But he said the life in Colorado was "too fast and the schools aren't nearly as good." A letter from the Consortium helped to draw Cunningham back to Iowa and

While the Internet was the recruitment tool that worked for Cunningham, more traditional face-to-face contact was used at a Job Fair held at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha. Military personnel who are transitioning back to civilian life are an excellent pool of workers to tap because of their high skills and a strong work ethic. Iowa Workforce Development staff in the Des Moines and Council Bluffs offices who specialize in helping veterans teamed up with employers to hold a Job Fair at Offutt.



A recruitment trip to Offutt A.F.B. helped to increase Iowa's labor pool.

Over two dozen central and western Iowa firms set up booths at the Officer's Club to search for workers. Nearly one hundred job seekers came through and visited with the companies. Great contacts were made on both sides and a good relationship was established with the base staff responsible for helping military personnel reenter civilian life.

Plans are being made to visit Ft. Riley in Kansas.

Making the Right Choice

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS making future career plans or anyone interested in new career opportunities, having the most current and accurate occupational and career information is the key. Providing those answers is the prime mission of a group of state partners with a funny name, ISOICC or the Iowa State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee. This group provides career information in a variety of formats, and is the collaborative efforts of Iowa Workforce Development and five other state agencies: Department of Economic Development, Bureau of Vocational and Technical Education and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and Iowa Board of Regents.

One of the group's main products is a state-wide computer-based career information delivery system called Iowa Choices™. Iowa Choices™ provides up-to-date information on hundreds of occupations, including those in the military plus information on thousands of colleges, trade and technical schools, graduate schools, hundreds of educational programs, and comprehensive financial aid information. It allows individuals to make informed career decisions by supplying information on an

occupation's future outlook, national and state wages, educational requirements, skills and abilities, physical demands, suggested high school courses, and much more. Its products are designed to help various age groups, starting

with young students (grades 4-6) to adults with or without a work history.

Iowa Choices™ is widely used by school counselors, teachers, workforce advisors, vocational rehabilitation counselors and media specialists. School counselors find it very helpful to assist students in making their future career plans.

"I've used Choices™ for a number of years. It is a library of career information that is updated daily. Its search

capabilities are easy to understand. Students love it," explained Terry Tribolet, Knoxville High School counselor.

Numerous workshops are conducted throughout the state by SOICC staff not only on Choices™ but on other products that impact education and career development.

Information about various SOICC products and services including a listing of scheduled workshops on Choices™, Real Game Series and other career-related resources can be easily accessed from the Iowa Workforce Development website, www.iowaworkforce.org. Look for the Career and Occupational Information heading.



Tom Carpenter (center) leads a class to explain the Choices™ program. On left is Terry Tribolet, Knoxville High School, and on the right is Doug Reed, Dallas Center Grimes High School.

Good Ideas & Iowa Communities

COMMUNITIES ARE LEARNING THAT when they share ideas and challenges with each other, they often find answers right in their own backyard.

One example of this theory is the growing partnership between Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) and Iowa State University (ISU) Extension Services. This new bond can be found in Dickinson County.

Dickinson County has thriving businesses and manufacturers that could benefit from IWD resources. IWD had up-to-date computer and software equipment, but no place to house this equipment in the county. ISU Extension Services had an office and a connection to the Internet, but needed to update their computer equipment. What a perfect opportunity. The two organizations pooled their resources with a solution that became reality in September 1999 in Spirit Lake.

A True Partnership

“We’re very excited about this partnership, which is the first of its kind in Iowa,” said Lori Adams, IWD Area Coordinator in Northwest Iowa. Joy Janachovsky, Dickinson County Extension Education Director said, “It’s been a win-win situation for all.”

The Extension Service office houses a computer equipped with tools to help customers with: Access to Internet job resources, IWD’s America’s Job Bank and Smart Career Move; Choices 99™, a career exploration tool; workforce trends and projections; word processing

and spreadsheet programs with “Microsoft Office”; resume making software, and a typing tutorial program.

An ISU Extension staff person is trained to handle basic questions and use the computer equipment. Any questions related to unemployment insurance are directed to Des Moines. Adams said the set up is ideal because a few IWD staff live in the area and can check on the equipment periodically as well as help in the office should customer traffic increase. This innovative plan gives both users of ISU Extension and IWD services access to more resources in their own community.

Des Moines Center

The Des Moines Workforce Development Center also realized the advantage of a partnership with ISU Extension to expand their existing efforts. An ISU intern is working in the Center once a week to assess the needs of customers, review IWD programs for ways to enhance training offered to customers, maintain an ISU Extension publications library, and develop contacts with other agencies located at the Center. Plans call for new classes taught by ISU Extension staff to cover topics like budgeting, divorce and single-parent issues for Promise Job clients involved in Iowa’s welfare-to-work program.

The strong educational and teaching background of ISU Extension helps make job candidates from the Center even more prepared for the work environment.

Helping Iowans Move from Welfare to the Workforce

WHEN LISLEY MILLER MOVED BACK to Iowa from Mississippi three years ago, introducing the Vice President of the United States was the furthest thing from her mind. Miller was born and raised in the Fort Dodge area, and she came back because “Iowa has a lot to offer.” Unfortunately, Miller lacked the skills to get a good job and she entered Iowa’s welfare system.

Under a program called Promise Jobs, Iowa Workforce Development works with the Department of Human Services to help welfare recipients improve their skills and become self-sufficient.

For Miller, the road to self-sufficiency started when she entered a two-year nursing program at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge. Miller excelled in the program and was on the College’s honor roll.

Under Promise Jobs, Miller received valuable assistance while attending school. Her expenses for child care, tuition, books and supplies were paid and Miller fulfilled her promise to finish the program. In June 1999 Miller graduated with an Associate Degree of Nursing. Shortly after she found herself on the podium introducing Vice President Gore.

A Typical Story

Elaine Weidlein has worked in the Promise Jobs program for over five years and she was part of the team that helped Miller. When the Vice President’s staff called asking for someone to introduce him, Miller came to mind. “I just felt she would do a good job of repre-

senting Promise Jobs participants,” Weidlein stressed.

Weidlein said Miller’s story is “not all that unusual. I see stories like her’s all the time, it is pretty typical,” Weidlein added.



■ Vice President Al Gore and Lisley Miller

Weidlein gets great satisfaction watching her clients succeed. “It felt really great,” to see Miller become self-sufficient, she said.

For the time being Miller is working at a local care facility as a nurse’s aide. She can’t wait to take the state board exams and earn her certification as a Registered Nurse. With that certification her final step to self-sufficiency will be complete.

Miller is just one story that proves the importance of going back to school to improve work skills. With Iowa’s Promise Jobs program and an accompanying federal welfare-to-work program, welfare recipients have the chance to move back into the workforce.

Photo © 1999 by Davitt Photo Alliance

Helping Workers

WHEN THE 625 WORKERS AT THE Sara Lee plant in New Hampton were notified of a shut down, Iowa Workforce Development's team went into action. A rapid response team with representatives from a number of government agencies met with local groups to explain the services available to laid-off workers. Irene Shultz coordinates the team and heads Iowa Workforce Development's Dislocated Workers Unit.

In early August, Shultz and local leaders coordinated a meeting with New Hampton community groups to talk about helping the workers. The superintendent of schools, local bankers, the ministerial association, the mayor, local economic developers and others met with IWD Director Richard Running and representatives from the Dept. of Human Services, the federal Dept. of Housing and Urban Development and the outplacement firm hired by Sara Lee. "We want one system to help the workers so we can coordinate our services," Shultz explained.

The Dislocated Workers Unit helps workers and employers through plant closings and bankruptcies and handles programs mandated by a number of different federal laws.

Services for workers include:

- Career counseling & skills assessment.
- Retraining programs.
- Help with job search, resume development and interviewing skills.
- Unemployment payments and other services to help in the transition.

Services for employers include:

- Confidential information about alternatives to avoid or reduce layoffs.
- Coordination with outplacement



From left, IWD Director Richard Running, Irene Shultz and Herman Meyer, New Hampton economic developer

services.

- On-site assistance in many cases.

Even in today's booming economic times the unit is busy. In November 1999 it was handling ten separate layoffs involving over 900 employees with over \$4.5 million federal dollars. Ten other layoffs have grants pending or applications in process.

How to Get Help

Iowa is one of the pilot states for the use of a toll-free number for employers or workers to ask for help, 1-877-US-2 JOBS or 1-877-872-5627.

"This program saves money by keeping workers productive," stressed Richard Running. "After personally going through a layoff, I know these services can help workers improve their skills and move to a better paying job in the long run," he added.

Services for Job Seekers

Iowa Workforce Development offers a one-stop system of services for job seekers. Here's what job seekers will find at many of the 71 Workforce Development Centers across the state:

- **Resource Center**—Contains the tools needed to prepare resumes, work on self-assessment and skill development, and to research local, state and national wage and occupational information. Computers are available for use to prepare and print resumes and cover letters.
- **Job Search Training**—Training on the most current job seeking skills to find and to keep a job.
- **Skill Assessment and Career Counseling**—Testing services to assist job seekers in identifying skills, interests and abilities and training needs to develop a comprehensive employment plan. Help is also available for upgrading current job skills or learning new ones.
- **Basic Education**—Training in mathematics, reading and writing to bring a job seeker's skills up to speed.
- **Placement**—Job seekers receive referral information on jobs and applications with local employers. The skills and interests of job seekers are matched with the right job.
- **Iowa Choices™**—Computer-based system that provides information on careers including educational requirements, wages, transferable job skills, educational programs and available training programs.
- **America's Job Bank**—This computerized national job bank helps employers and job seekers find each other. Employers list their job openings and job seekers can post their resumes electronically. Available on the Internet or by accessing IWD's Web Site: www.iowaworkforce.org
- **Labor Market Information**—Information on current wage rates, future job projections, top county employers and economic conditions is available electronically, on the Internet and in publication form.
- **Income and Support Services**—All 71 Workforce Development Centers help dislocated workers file unemployment claims. Income and support services are available for laid-off workers while they look for employment or pursue training. Individuals unemployed through no fault of their own may get weekly unemployment benefits for up to 26 weeks. Support assistance is also offered to "welfare-to-work" participants who are transitioning from government assistance to self-sufficiency.

Helping Employers

THE BARILLA PASTA PLANT IN AMES is one example of the recruitment services offered by Iowa Workforce Development (IWD). When this Italian firm announced Ames as a possible site, IWD was a partner in the local economic development team that presented a proposal to the company. Del Denekas from the Ames Workforce Development Center sat down with Barilla executives during their site visit.

“We discussed the local wage structure, the availability of workers and the recruitment services we could provide,” Denekas explained. When the Ames site was selected, the staff at the Workforce Development Center sprang into action.

Recruitment Services

“Everything was funneled through the Center,” Denekas stressed. IWD staff handled all the initial calls about the jobs, helped to screen applicants and even set up interviews for Barilla’s human resource representatives.

“We’ve screened thousands of workers for them,” Denekas said.

“They saved us money in a number of ways,” said the plant’s human resource manager David Bogenshultz. “It saved us money in terms of staffing because we were able to use their workers throughout the recruitment process. It also saved us time because we were

able to move quickly and efficiently to fill the plant’s human resource needs,” Bogenshultz emphasized. “Everything went through their office.”

Using the Workforce Development Center was perfect for Barilla. The Center acted as the company’s human resource office while the plant was still being built and Center staff handled thousands of questions and the myriad of details when the Barilla start-up team was small.



On-going Relationship

Now the plant is in production with almost 120 workers. The relationship between Barilla and Iowa Workforce Development goes on. Barilla plans to add a fourth production line and 35 more workers and continues to rely on Denekas and the staff at the Ames Center to process applications and set up interviews. “We have a good partnership with Barilla,” Denekas said, “and we want to continue helping them.”

Simplifying the System Employers Use

THE PROGRAM IS CALLED STAWRS and it stands for Simplified Tax And Wage Reporting System. The idea is pretty basic. Why not simplify the system employers use to report state and federal taxes? Instead of providing much of the same information to three separate government agencies, with STAWRS the information is provided to Iowa Workforce Development which passes it on to the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance and the Internal Revenue Service (I.R.S.).

Under STAWRS, which is pronounced with a silent W, employers enjoy a simpler more electronic system that cuts down on the time and paper work associated with paying taxes. The program also helps the government agencies because the information is received electronically which makes it easier to process and improves accuracy.

STAWRS required several years of planning to establish the electronic forms for unemployment insurance taxes collected by Iowa Workforce Development, state taxes collected by the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance and federal taxes collected by the Internal Revenue Service.

Pilot Testing

The Short & Oberreuter CPA firm is a full service accounting firm in Adel. They volunteered to be part of the pilot for STAWRS because they are interested in using technology to help their customers.

“We’re looking for ways to get rid of paperwork and make it easier and quicker for our clients to file tax information,” Angela Oberreuter explained.

Although there were a few bugs to iron out,



| *Angela Oberreuter says the STAWRS program will help her firm’s clients*

overall Oberreuter says the program has worked well. “So far, so good,” she stressed.

Oberreuter said the people at Iowa Workforce Development “have been great to work with.” The feeling is mutual.

“We appreciate all of the help we’ve received from our three pilot companies,” said Renny Dohse who heads the STAWRS project. “We also want to thank the Iowa Department of Revenue and Finance and the I.R.S. for their close cooperation in this project. It has been a true partnership from the very beginning,” Dohse added.

Eventually employers will be able to file information on the Internet. For now a software program carries the information on disk sent by modem. It is one step in the process of helping employers and cutting back on paperwork. For all those involved with filing and processing tax information, programs like STAWRS promise to make the process faster and more accurate.

Services for Employers

Iowa Workforce Development offers tools for employers to tackle today's workplace demands. Whether it's matching businesses with suitable job seekers or helping develop their workforce, we have the resources for employers.

- **Job Placement:** IWD can refer qualified applicants for job interviews. Employers can start the process by placing a job order by phone, fax or mail with their local Workforce Development Center.
- **Work Keys:** Here's a tool to help employers put the right person in the right job, reduce turnover, and improve their bottom line. Work Keys can also help identify training areas to increase productivity.
- **Labor Market Information:** Employers can use our data when they're thinking of expanding their business or want to find available labor. We have information on prevailing wage and benefit packages, and the availability of workers.
- **Financial Incentives:** Work Opportunities Tax Credits (WOTC) or reimbursements for On-the-Job Training Services can help lessen the risk of hiring new employees. Some eligibility requirements apply.
- **America's Job Bank:** The largest international job site, America's Job Bank can help employers and job seekers find each other on the Internet. Employers can post a job and search the resume data base.
- **Assistance with Plant Closings and Layoffs:** We assist communities, employers and employees involved in work force adjustments with a rapid response team. Job search workshops, new training opportunities and registration for unemployment insurance are some of the services we can offer.
- **Workplace Safety:** Our staff can help businesses maintain compliance with federal workplace safety laws. Safe work places improve productivity and can decrease some insurance costs.
- **Teaming up with Partners:** IWD doesn't provide these services by itself. We team up with community colleges, local business development groups and other private and public organizations to help your business grow.

Safety Is Number One at Plexco

TAKING SAFETY TO THE NEXT LEVEL was the reason the Plexco plant in Bloomfield started the certification process to become part of the Voluntary Protection Program or VPP. Safety had always been a focus for this injection molding operation which makes fittings for utility pipes.

“It’s management’s responsibility to have a safe workplace,” emphasized plant manager David Whelan. “To be effective, a safety program has to involve everyone at the company,” Whelan explained.

Nikki Swain is a worker who has been part of the Central Safety Committee since it started 5 years ago. “Anyone on the floor can come up with a safety idea and people give us their thoughts because we get things taken care of,” she explains. The managers respond quickly to our requests, she said.

VPP is one part of Iowa Workforce Development’s commitment to help employers and workers develop partnerships for safe workplaces. Reaching VPP certification is a major achievement and indicates safety is the firm’s number one goal. Plexco started the process in 1995 and was certified as a VPP company three years later in May 1998.

Benefits

There are a number of advantages with achieving the VPP certification. Cutting accidents reduces workers’ compensation insurance rates. Employees are also more productive when they work in a safe environment and morale is higher.

In today’s tight labor market with record low unemployment rates, a safe workplace also



“We’ve worked very hard to make sure there is ownership by all workers in our safety program,” explained Plexco plant manager David Whelan at far right. He is joined by Sandra McClure, Safety Coordinator and Tracy Morgan, Production Superintendent.

helps reduce employee turnover. Plexco has gone a step further by tying several employee incentives to the safety program including a 1% bonus, and extra days off when the plant continues its string of days without an accident. On October 21, 1999, the plant had gone 1,345 days without a reportable accident which translated into two extra days of vacation. Soon employees will earn a third day.

Plexco and other companies in the VPP program tend to proactively attack possible accidents. “We aggressively document near misses,” Production Superintendent Tracy Morgan stressed. “We want to address it before it becomes an accident.”

At Plexco safety is constantly on everyone’s minds. “The VPP certification is only the beginning,” Whelan said.

Labor Division Makes Strategic Plans & Actions

WHAT STARTED AS A FEDERAL mandate has turned into a positive for the Division of Labor. In fact, the head of Iowa's OSHA enforcement, Mary Bryant, calls it, "One of the best things IOSH has ever done."

In this case "it" is a five-year strategic plan which was drafted by a steering committee and now is being implemented through a set of teams.

The Background

As part of a federal law called the Government Performance Results Act, many federal agencies are required to write five-year strategic plans. Because federal funds also flow through to state agencies, some federal departments, including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), required their state partners to develop five-year plans.

A steering committee started that process in Iowa and now has drafted a five-year plan.

Bryant says input from staff at all levels—clerical, field and manager—was an early key to developing an effective plan. Identifying reachable and plausible goals was another.

"We realized that the people who actually do the work would be able to tell us how to improve the process," Bryant said.

The plan is viewed as a living document that will be amended and adapted rather than filed away in a cabinet and forgotten. It begins the process of setting up specific steps to implement some of its major goals.

Bryant says it was hard for already busy people to commit the time to go through a strategic planning exercise. But in the long run,

the plan should help direct their activities and make their use of time more efficient. "The input we received from the staff was and is very important," Bryant said.



Byron Orton
Iowa's Labor Commissioner

The Plan's Goals

The plan has three major strategic goals which are broken down into smaller more manageable steps. Here's a quick snapshot of those goals and some of the smaller steps.

■ **Improve workplace safety and health** for all workers, as evidenced by fewer hazards, reduced exposures and fewer injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

One of the smaller steps under this goal is to decrease crushing and fall fatalities and injuries by 15% in the Iowa

construction industry by the year 2003. The Labor Division plans to maintain a strong enforcement presence as a deterrent while developing partnerships and compliance and education programs.

Here are the other two major goals.

■ **Change the Iowa workplace culture** to increase employer and worker awareness of, commitment to, and involvement in safety and health.

Some of the sub steps under this objective include more closely integrating the work of enforcement with training and consultation.

■ **Secure public confidence** through excellence in the development and delivery of OSHA's programs and services.

Under this objective you'll find steps to iden-

tify new ways to communicate with important stakeholders. The Division also plans on tracking public confidence to see if the steps are effective.

Bryant says the plan will help the Division standardize the steps taken to handle and process complaints and requests for consultation and education. “We wanted to look at some

of the things we are doing and some of the things we aren’t doing to be more responsive,” she noted.

Improving communication, both internally and externally, is a common theme found in the report. To improve internal communication the Division is now meeting quarterly to review implementation steps.



Hitting the Home Run

THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION DIVISION is getting ready for the big leagues starting on July 1, 2001. That is the day paper processing ends and Iowa's workers' compensation industry begins the real game with Electronic Data Interchange—Release 2. At that time, all claims will be received only electronically. In short, electronic data will be in and paper forms will be out.

The change was prompted by an old opponent: a paper-based processing system for first-report of injury forms. This dated system causes delays, creates sluggish plays, and increases the likelihood of errors—deadly combinations for a winning team.

The Coach of the IWD team decided to warm up the Iowa players for the 2001 date by participating in the first round of the standardized reporting—Release 1. This release got a few players used to the new idea of transmitting the first-report of injury forms electronically.

When it came time for the big guns—EDI Release 2, Iowa Workforce Development was the only state to step up to the plate. The new release went into official production July 1, 1999 with EMC Insurance Companies. Now, about a dozen carriers and self-adjusters are using Release 1 with EMC using Release 2.

Release 2

Release 2 is more flexible than the prior version and better meets the needs of the industry. Recipients receive an electronic acknowledgment which walks them through the process to correct errors right away. This gives

IWD staff more time to analyze the output and to create reports and data about work related injuries rather than correcting mistakes.

Imagine playing a game in Ohio where an umpire calls you out after four strikes, but in Iowa, it only takes three. This kind of confusion is happening in the workers' compensation industry since terms vary from state to state. With Release 2, the industry can communicate in the same language and create a standard practice using the same terms. This means a home run is a home run wherever you go.

EMC Insurance Companies decided to take advantage of a simplified form for multi-state companies by using one electronic form to gather information for all states. EMC placed the form on the

Internet to allow its customers the ability to input information directly into the system. This streamlined effort makes the process run faster and more efficient. Since it's approved by the IAIABC (International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions), just a few minor changes are needed to comply and then the information can be approved and sent to the Workers' Compensation Division.

As with any team, being out front can be a little risky, but it has its rewards. The American Insurance Association was a little unsure at first about the departure of EDI from traditional paper plays in the industry. However, after seeing the well-thought out strategy and gradual implementation date, the Association proposed Iowa's guidelines as a model for other states to follow and adopt.

IWD has had some other big-name players



*Iowa's Workers' Compensation
Commissioner
Iris Post*

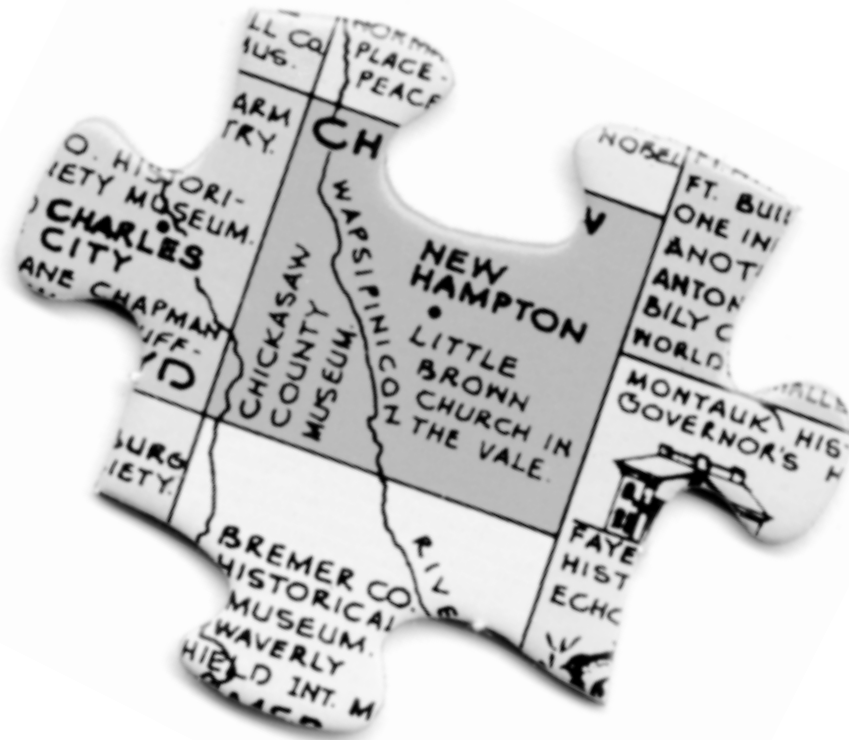
join the team.

When it comes to first-report of injury claims, Risk Manager Mike Wieck has 3,500 Polk County and Prairie Meadows employees to consider. "I think this (EDI) is absolutely the best way to go," Wieck said. "It (the report) goes right into the system and will get kicked right back to you when there's a problem. No waiting to know whether or not there's a problem. One shot and you're done."

Polk County is currently preparing to join the EDI team for the fall/spring season warm-ups.

Although more players have joined the team, all will be required to by the July 1, 2001 deadline. No one wants to jump into the big game cold, so Workers' Compensation has created the perfect practice schedule with four opportunities shown below to work out the bugs or any challenges with the new system.

Participants	Implementation Period
11—Tier 0	Volunteering before implementation period dates
15—Tier 1	January 2000 to June 30, 2000
24—Tier 2	July 1 to December 31, 2000
72—Tier 3	January 1 to June 30, 2000



By the Numbers: Financial Information

Summary of Cash Transactions

Cash Balance July 1, 1998

Workforce Dev. Div. Funds	\$12,061
Labor Services Division Funds	\$70,312
Workers' Comp. Division Funds	\$23,371
Labor Management Council Funds	\$23,700
Strategic Retirement Funds	\$459,557
Employment Statistics Funds	\$5,070
Iowa Corp Funds	\$210,725
Workforce Development Initiative Funds	\$38,520
Penalty & Interest Funds	\$895,177
Department Approved Training Funds	\$889
Admin. Contribution Surcharge Funds	\$591,760
Amateur Boxing Funds	\$31,036
Cash Balance Begin	\$2,362,178

Cash Added

Cash Received	\$106,749,685
Reversion	(\$172,455)
Net Cash Added	\$106,577,230

Total Funds Available \$108,939,408

FY 1999 Obligations \$100,602,765

Changes in Accrued Asset and Liability Accounts

Accounts Receivable	\$-
Travel Advances	(\$6,771)
Supply Inventory	(\$42,923)
Voucher in Process	(\$147,849)
Accounts Payable	(\$2,332,560)
Accrued Payroll	(\$392,150)
Accrued Benefits	(\$23,948)
Resources on Order	(\$656,945)
Total Change	(\$131,940)

Cash Disbursements \$101,764,127

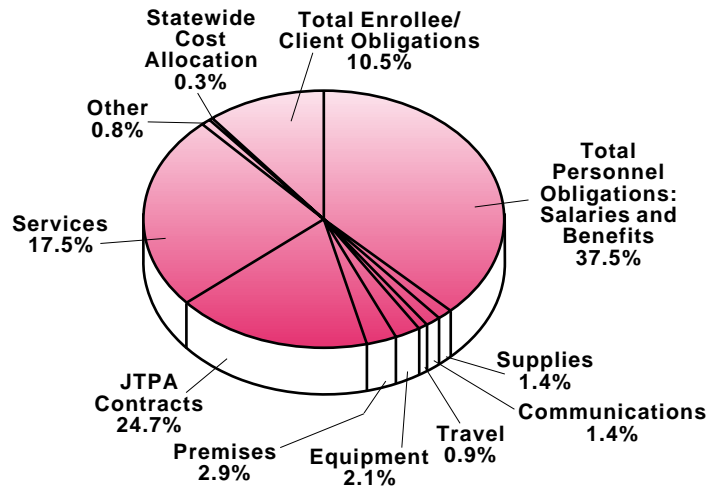
Cash Available less Cash Disbursements
..... \$7,175,281

Cash Balance June 30, 1999

Workforce Development Division Funds	\$32,498
Labor Services Division Funds	\$34,767
Workers' Comp. Division Funds	\$26,994
Labor Management Council Funds	\$27,340
Strategic Retirement Funds	\$1,096,061
Employment Statistics Funds	\$17,755
Integrated Systems and Comm. Resources ..	\$1,877,099
Welfare to Work	\$541,968
Iowa Corp Funds	\$200,061
Workforce Dev. Initiative Funds	\$27,957
Penalty & Interest Funds	\$1,134,813
Department Approved Training Funds	\$370
Admin. Contribution Surcharge Funds	\$2,099,686
Amateur Boxing Funds	\$57,912

Cash Balance Ending \$7,175,281

Operating Expenditures by Classification



Total Obligations: \$100,602,765

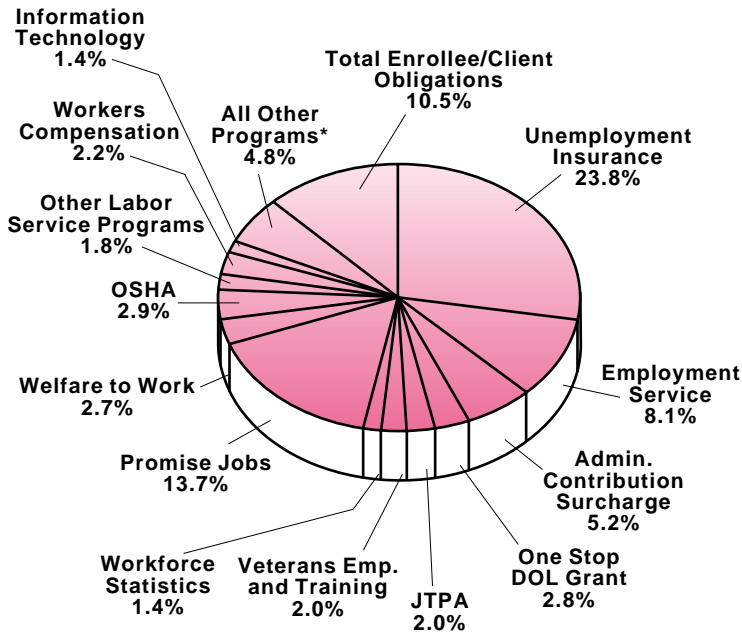
**Funding Sources FY 99
July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999**

	Amount	Percent
Federal	\$69,081,439	68.7%
State	\$15,556,457	15.5%
Transfers	\$14,148,871	14.1%
Other	\$1,815,998	1.8%
Total	\$100,602,765	100%

Funds Spent by Program

	Amount	Percent
Unemployment Insurance	\$23,950,452	23.8%
Employment Service	\$8,099,516	8.1%
Admin. Contribution Surcharge	\$5,259,706	5.2%
One Stop DOL Grant	\$2,779,126	2.8%
JTPA	\$16,889,246	2.0%
Veterans Emp. and Training	\$2,002,462	2.0%
Workforce Statistics	\$1,426,098	1.4%
Promise Jobs	\$13,746,363	13.7%
Welfare to Work	\$2,752,048	2.7%
OSHA	\$2,919,596	2.9%
Other Labor Service Programs	\$1,847,975	1.8%
Workers' Compensation	\$2,228,630	2.2%
Information Technology	\$1,409,032	1.4%
All Other Programs*	\$1,710,440	4.8%
Total	\$90,055,315	89.5%

**Operating Expenditures
by Program**



Total Obligations: \$100,602,765

Enrollee/Client Obligations

Food Stamp	\$30,686	0.03%
Amateur Boxing Grants	\$26,235	0.03%
Trade Adjustment	\$646,308	0.6%
NAFTA	\$174,162	0.173%
Department Approved Training	\$890	0.001%
Disaster Unemployment	\$9,655,134	9.6%
JTPA	\$9,890	0.01%
Other	\$4,145	0.004%

Total Enrollee/Client Obligations \$10,547,450 10.5%

Total Obligations \$100,602,765 100%

*** All Other Programs:**

Penalty and Interest	\$554,135	0.6%
Labor Certification	\$355,236	0.4%
Trade Adjustment Assistance	\$229,361	0.2%
NAFTA	\$1,397	0.0%
Strategic Recruitment	\$112,126	0.1%
ISOICC	\$604,586	0.6%
Workforce Development	\$96,563	0.1%
Disaster Unemployment	\$822,915	0.8%
Food Stamp	\$258,306	0.3%
Other Programs	\$1,710,440	1.7%

Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA)

	Funding	Participants
Adult Training	\$3,583,969	1,303
Summer Youth Employment & Training	\$3,495,866	1,830
Dislocated Workers Employment & Training	\$4,603,653	1,725
Federal Discretionary Grants	\$4,392,675	847
Strategic Workforce Development Fund	\$1,332,020	1,997
PROMISE JOBS	\$15,600,000	27,178
Welfare-to-Work	\$8,300,000	484
	(for 3-year period)	
Trade Adjustment Assistance	\$4,154,463	2,055
Wagner-Peyser	\$18,000,000	
(Employment Service & Unemployment Insurance)		
Unemployment Insurance Total Claims Filed		146,116
Total Number of Programs		28
Total Funding	\$70,193,243	
Total Customers Provided Services		783,136

By the Numbers: Workplace Safety

**Amusement Park/Ride Permits Issued,
Inspections and Fees Generated**

Permits Issued	119
Inspections	
Electrical	586
Mechanical-Electric	659
Total	1,245
Fees Generated	
Permit Fees	\$2,870
Inspection Fees	\$67,830
Total	\$70,700
Personal Injuries Reported	4

Discrimination Case Activity

	New Cases	Closed Cases
Total	28	33

NOTE: Limited to discrimination allegations by an employee against an employer to discrimination for exercising his or her rights under the Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Act.

**Education and Public Sector
Consultation Activities**

Educational seminars	109
Number in attendance	4,701
Ten-Hour classes conducted	37
Number trained	716
Consultations Conducted	15
Serious Hazards Identified	34
Serious Hazards Corrected	30
Other-than-Serious Hazards Identified	2
Employees Covered	1,364

**Private Sector Safety and
Health Consultation Activity**

Consultations Conducted	164
Serious Hazards Identified	725
Serious Hazards Corrected	679
Other-than-Serious Hazards Identified	115
Employees Covered	13,759

Asbestos Licensing and Permit Activity

Individual Licenses issued

(contractor/supervisor, project designer, inspector/
management planner, inspector, management planner,
worker)

Company Permits Issued	57
New Company Permits	7
Renewed Company Permits	50

Fees Collected	\$83,570.00
Individual Licenses	\$55,070.00
Company Permits	\$28,500.00

**Boiler Inspections and Fees Generated
(State and Insured Boilers)**

	Inspections	Fees Generated
State Scheduled	2,920	\$128,692.00
Insured	14,757	\$224,816.00
Total	17,677	\$353,508.00

Special Inspector Commissions

Number granted	213
Fees Generated	\$6,390.00

**Elevator Operating Permits Issued, Inspections
and Fees Generated**

Permits Issued	6,776
Total Inspections	6,566
Total Fees Generated	\$572,089.00

**Private Employment Agencies
Licenses Issued and Fees Collected**

Licenses	224
Fees	\$16,800.00

**Facility Submissions under the
Emergency Planning & Community
Right-to-Know Act, Section 312**

Calendar Year 1998

Hazardous Chemical Forms	3,255
Total Hazardous Chemicals Reported	15,256
Facilities Submitting Electronically	17,653

**Construction Contractor Registration
Registrations Issued and
Fees Generated**

Registrations	6,681
Fees	\$167,025.00
Fines	\$19,950.00
Total Program Revenue	\$186,975.00

**Professional Athletic Licenses
Issued and Revenues Collected**

	Wrestling	Boxing	Tournaments
Number of Licenses	3	31	7
Revenue Collected	\$14,802.52	\$21,495.35	\$8,837.10

**Distribution of Work Related Employee Deaths
and Employment by Industry
Calendar Year 1998**

Industry	Employment		Deaths	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Private Sector	1,248,700	100.0	59	100.0
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	44,900	3.6	4	6.8
Mining	2,200	.2	2	3.4
Construction	62,200	5.0	14	23.7
Manufacturing	261,600	21.0	9	15.2
Transportation & Public Utilities	69,200	5.5	4	6.8
Wholesale Trade	86,300	6.9	8	13.6
Retail Trade	267,600	21.4	7	11.9
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	83,000	6.6	1	1.7
Services	371,700	29.8	10	16.9
Total Public Sector	235,700	100.0	8	100.0

Occupational Safety and Health Bureau State Performance

	Number	Percent
Total Inspections Conducted	555	
Private Sector Inspections	512	92.3%
Public Sector Inspections	43	7.7%
Safety Inspections	348	62.7%
Health Inspections	207	37.3%
Accident Inspections	58	10.5%
Complaint Inspections	185	33.3%
General Schedule Inspections	296	53.3%
Follow-up Inspections	16	2.9%
Construction Inspections	232	41.8%
Manufacturing Inspections	156	28.1%
Other Industries Inspections	167	30.1%
Total Number of Violations	1,137	
Avg. = 3.7/100 Empl. Covered		
Serious Violations	706	62.1%
Willful Violations	5	.4%
Repeat Violations	11	1.0%

	Number	Percent
Other Violations	411	36.1%
Failure to Abate Violations	4	.4%

Total Penalties Proposed	\$1,240,541
Serious Penalties	\$754,866
Avg. = \$1,069/Violation	
Willful Penalties	\$350,000
Avg. = \$70,000/Violation	
Repeat Penalties	\$52,100
Avg = \$4,736	
Other Penalties	\$71,855
Avg. = \$175	
Failure to Abate Penalties	\$11,700
Avg. = \$2,925/Violation	

Total Employees Covered	
by Inspections	31,113
Avg. = 56/Inspection	
Total Number of	
Inspections Contested	73 13.2%

Work Related Employee Fatalities by Cause of Death

Calendar Year 1998		
Conditions Subject to IOSHA/OSHA Inspections and Standards		
Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Falls	8	11.9
Electrocution	5	7.5
Struck by or against object	5	7.5
Crushing injuries	2	3.0
Suffocation	2	3.0
Caught in or under	2	3.0
Explosion	2	3.0
Burns	1	1.4
Subject to IOSHA/OSHA	27	40.3

Conditions Not Subject to IOSHA/OSHA Inspections and Standards		
Cause of Death	Number	Percent
Heart Attack	22	32.8
Vehicle Accident	10	14.9
Air Crash	6	9.0
Homicide	2	3.0
Not Subject to IOSHA/OSHA	40	59.7
Total	67	100.0

Wage Collection Cases

	Number of Claims	Amount Claimed or Collected
Active claims at start		
of fiscal year	376	
Wage claims docketed	1,192	\$1,105,681.88
Claims denied	581	
Uncollectible	30	
Claims settled		
before lawsuit	461	\$291,370.30
Claims settled		
after lawsuit	0	0
Court actions:		
Dismissals	3	
Satisfied judgments	1	\$2,753.13
Unsatisfied judgments	1	
Total money collected		
on cases closed		\$294,123.43
Active cases at end		
of fiscal year	569	

By the Numbers: Workers' Compensation

Workers' Compensation Division Summary of Activity

Contested File Inventory by Hearing Site

Burlington	422
Cedar Rapids	371
Council Bluffs	567
Davenport	608
Des Moines	1,921
Dubuque	286
Fort Dodge	272
Mason City	149
Oskaloosa	169
Sioux City	548
Storm Lake	241
Waterloo	440
Total	5,994

(Includes Cases on Appeal; WCC, DC, IS)

Contested Case Inventory by Level

	Number
Deputy	5,546
Appeals	340
District Court	82
Supreme Court	26

Contested Cases Filed

Petitions Filed	Number	Percent
Arbitration	4,267	94.3%
Review Reopening	134	3.0%
Alternate Medical Care	75	1.7%
Other	47	1.0%
Total	4,523	100.00%

First Level Contested Files Closed

Dismissed	573	13.7%
Settled	3,011	71.8%
Decision	601	14.3%
Miscellaneous	7	0.2%
Total	4,192	100.0%

Time Analysis of Closed Contested Files (Avg in days) (for Deputy decisions only)

Petition to Hearing	464
Petition to Decision	549
Hearing to Decision	85

Analysis of First Level Contested File Work

Mediations Held	1,031
Mediations Settled	722
Hearings	637
Decisions	601

Analysis of Appeals to Workers' Compensation Commissioner (Includes Remands)

Number Appealed	351
Appeals Closed	334

Appealed Case Inventory on July 1, 1999 (Includes Remands)

Total	340
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