

South Carolina Workers' Compensation Commission



Annual Accountability Report

2008-2009

Section I - Executive Summary

1. Mission and Values

Our Mission

Provide an equitable and timely system of benefits to injured workers and to employers in the most responsive, accurate, and reliable manner possible.

To accomplish this mission, the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Commission will:

- Administer the workers' compensation laws of this State in a fair, impartial and timely manner;
- Recommend improvements and changes to the laws governing the administration of the system;
- Ensure a professionally trained staff;
- Continually strive to improve the quality of services and products; and,
- Provide information to foster an understanding of and compliance with the workers' compensation laws of the State of South Carolina.

2. Major Achievements in FY 08-09

Over the past year, the Commission has implemented an automated process to monitor outstanding fines, which prompts late notices to be created according to a batch program run bi-monthly. The result is a systematic follow up process driven by the age of an outstanding fine to replace a reliance upon the assessor to manually send late notices.

The development of departmental and individual electronic workflows has allowed the Commission to streamline several processes. Electronic workflow has lowered opportunity cost and increased efficiency.

The Commission held one day training sessions for three insurance carriers and held a claims administrations seminar for fifty attendees. The purpose of providing training to agency constituents is to minimize the number of file deficiencies. Lowering file deficiencies results in minimizing the number of fine assessments and expedites hearings.

Electronic document management was introduced through scanning and imaging documents. Software development was completed allowing the Commission to receive First Report of Injury claim information through Electronic Data Interface Release 3. This is the first step in the Commission being able to receive claim payment reports and periodic status reports electronically.

As of July 1, 2007 the Commission is required to maintain all claim files for fifteen years. In an effort to comply in the most cost effective manner, the agency began electronic storage of closed cases. The process of scanning compliance investigations, self insurance files, and Claim Form 15, 15S, 17, 18, and 20 was created and implemented. On average, 18,000 documents are scanned per month.

Software development to provide web access to hearing and appeal schedules and other claims status information for registered users was completed. Registered users will be able to track changes in hearing schedules, add an attorney to a case and access claim numbers through the new application. This information is currently researched manually by commission employees, providing electronic access will minimize research time in several departments.

In an effort to reduce cost and minimize storage space the Commission downsized its file room. Previously the agency was spending \$48,750 per year for 3,000 square feet of space. The decision to downsize was precipitated by implementing an electronic document management system. As a result, the agency currently has a 1,495 square foot file room that cost \$19,808 per year, an annual savings of \$28,941.

3. Key Strategic Goals for Present and Future Years

Present Goals

- Create an imaging document management system to house all agency documents electronically.
- Optimize the timeliness and accuracy of benefits provided to injured workers by monitoring, in real time, the administration of all workers' compensation claims.
- Contain total medical costs while preserving worker access to quality medical care by revising the Medical Services Provider Manual.
- Review 100% of all settlements within one day of receipt
- Review 100% of all initial notices of payment of temporary total compensation within one day of receipt
- Close all claims within three days of receipt of required documents
- Assign contested cases for adjudication within sixty days of filing
- Serve the Decision and Order of Full Commission Review within thirty days of oral argument
- Process motions, mediation and informal conference requests within three days of receipt
- Docket all request for Full Commission Review within forty-five days of filing
- Ensure all companies and individuals encompassed by the Worker's Compensation Act comply with its provisions
- Complete compliance investigations within forty-five days

Future Goals

- Track cycle time of files and aging of accounts for all claims filed with the Commission
- Process all Commission forms electronically
- Scan all incoming documents for electronic reference
- Develop and implement electronic workflow applications
- Provide constituents with claims information via the internet through a secure log in application
- Reduce the percentage of improper coverage submissions through the claims filing process
- Replace the claims manual review processes with electronic review and deficiency notification
- Reduce the percentage of processing errors in claims, both internally and externally
- Monitor all workers' compensation cases appealed to higher courts

4. Your Key strategic challenges (i.e. mission, operational, human resources, financial, and community related strategic challenges)

Financial limitations are a threat to the development of projects that are technical in nature. The Commission has received funding to support a multi-year computer project. Phase I of that project replaced the agency computer system that was installed in 1990. Phase II will substantially enhance the technical environment in which the agency operates. Allocating the remaining funding has posed a strategic challenge. The executive staff is committed to intimately examining the most cost effective means of obtaining the technological advancements necessary to best serve our customers and utilizes our allocated funds. The Commission also anticipates an operational learning curve resulting from the transition of a manual, paper process driven system to one that is imaging, electronic and document management based through software applications.

5. How the accountability report is used to improve organizational performance (describe the process and improvements achieved through the accountability report preparation and self-assessment process)

Sections of the accountability report are used as a management tool. The strategic plan is used to assess and adjust the direction of the Commission, produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape the organization, and determine clear objectives and goals. The process management section of the report is used to define processes, assign ownership, and measure process performance. Actively using the report as a management tool results in continuous improvement for the organization.

Section II - Organizational Profile

1. Organizations main products and services and the primary methods by which they are delivered.

The Workers' Compensation Commission is responsible for overseeing and administering the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Act. The Act serves to relieve employers of liability from common law suits involving negligence in exchange for becoming responsible for medical costs and loss wages of on-the-job injuries regardless of fault. These services are delivered by the Commission adhering to the agency's six basic objectives:

- Provide sure, prompt, and reasonable income and medical benefits to work-related accident victims, or income benefits to their dependents, regardless of fault;
- Provide an exclusive remedy and reduce court delays, costs and judicial workloads arising out of personal injury litigation;
- Relieve public and private charities of financial demands incident to uncompensated occupational accidents;
- Minimize payment of fees to lawyers and witnesses as well as time-consuming trials and court appeals;
- Encourage maximum employer interest in safety and rehabilitation through an appropriate experience-rating mechanism; and

2. Key customer groups and their key requirements/expectations.

The Commission has identified its two most important customer groups: South Carolina's employers and their employees. Their expectations are to receive an equitable, fair, responsive and reliable workers' compensation system.

3. Key stakeholder groups

Other customers who are involved in the workers' compensation system and provide services of one type or another to employers and their employees include, but are not limited to: insurance companies, self-insured funds, third-party administrators, attorneys, physicians, hospitals, Commission employees, the South Carolina Congressional delegation, the South Carolina Legislative delegation, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Attorney General's office, the State Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation, the Uninsured Employers Fund and the Second Injury Fund, the FBI and the U.S. Office of the Attorney General, the Social Security Administration and the State Accident Fund.

4. Key suppliers and partners

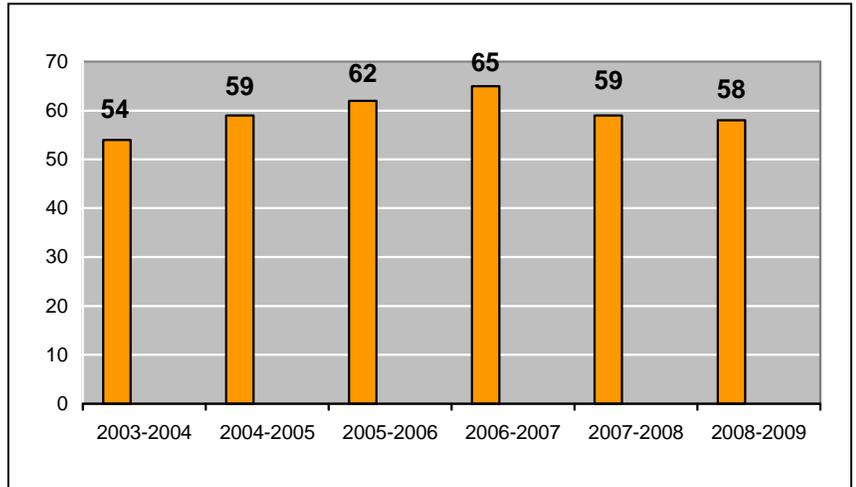
- Insurance companies
- Self-insured funds
- Third-party administrators
- Attorneys
- Physicians
- Hospitals
- Department of Commerce
- Employment Security Commission
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- State Attorney General’s Office
- State Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation
- Uninsured Employers Fund and the Second Injury Fund
- FBI and the U.S. Office of the Attorney General
- Social Security Administration
- State Accident Fund
- Department of Insurance

5. Your operation location

- a. Main: South Carolina Workers’ Compensation Commission
1333 Main Street, Suite 500, Columbia, South Carolina 29201
- b. Sites: All 46 Counties (sites of actual workers’ compensation hearings)

6. Number of Employees: 58

49 Classified employees
9 Unclassified employees



7. The regulatory environment under which your organization operates

The Commission consists of seven Commissioners appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate for terms of six years. The Governor designates one commissioner as Chair for a term of two years. The Chair may serve two terms in a six-year period, though not

consecutively. The Chair is the chief executive officer of the Commission and responsible for implementing the policies established by the Commission in its capacity as the governing board.

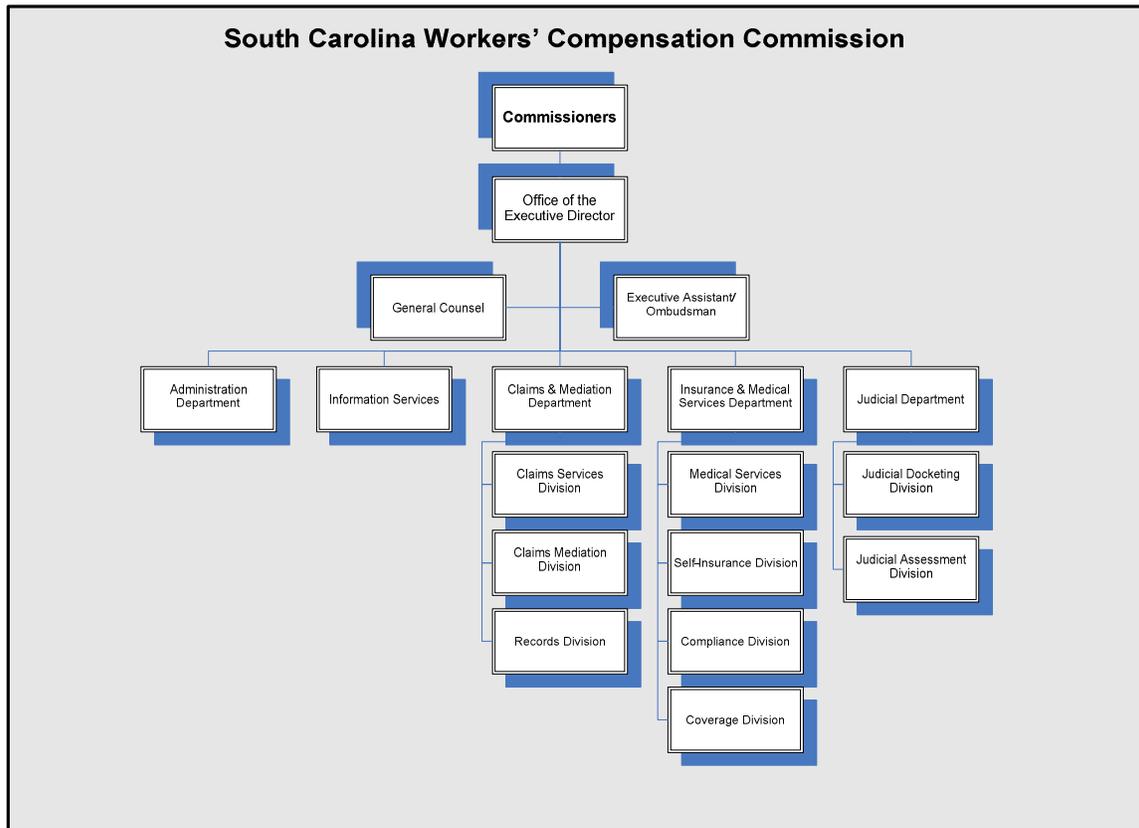
The day-to-day administration and operation of the Commission is the responsibility of the Executive Director who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the seven commissioners acting in their capacity as the board of directors of the agency. The Executive Director functions as the Commission's Chief Operating Officer.

Under the general supervision and management of the executive director are the Commission's five functional departments: (1) Administration, (2) Claims, (3) Insurance & Medical Services, (4) Judicial and (5) Information Services. Each department is under the supervision of a director and may be organized into one or more operational divisions.

8. Your performance improvement system

The Commission is committed to improving the workers' compensation system through several ongoing initiatives. The Commission's one-day seminar on claims management, Claims Administration Made Easy, was held and the corresponding publication marketed to interested individuals. This seminar has been approved for 4.75 CLE credit hours. Commissioners and executive staff made presentations at the 32nd Annual Workers' Compensation Education Conference sponsored by the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Educational Association. The Commission co-sponsored with the Educational Association the 30th Annual Workers' Compensation Medical Seminar, a three day conference devoted to medical issues relevant to workers' compensation. In addition, Commission employees are routinely asked to speak on various subjects to outside organizations and groups. The Commission routinely provides staff to conduct training for insurance carriers and self-insured employers.

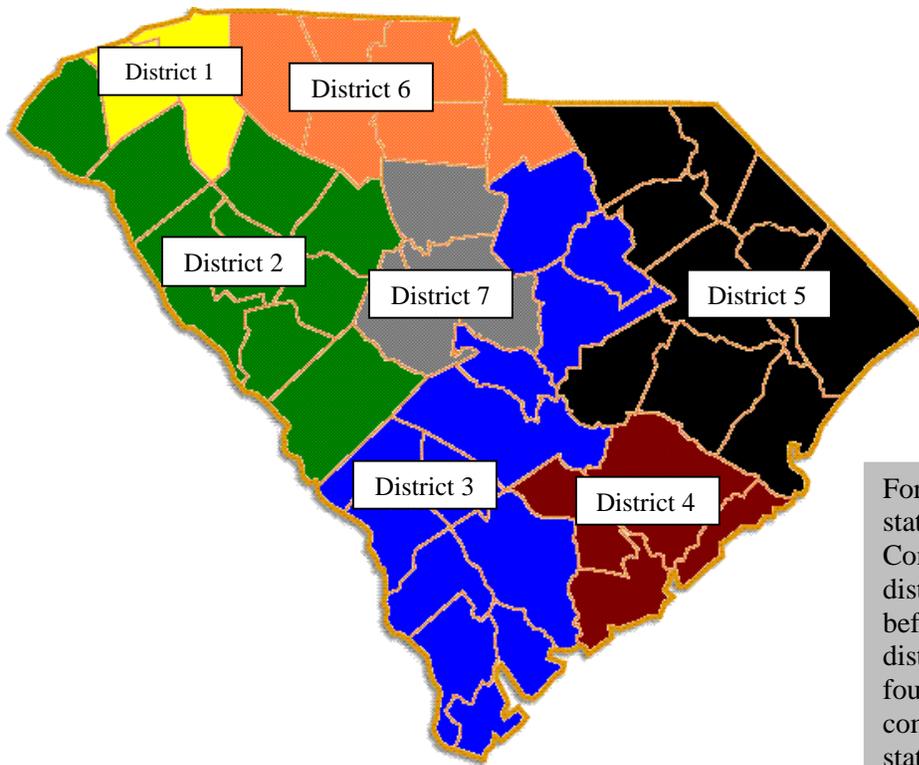
9. Your organizational structure



Commissioners

Commissioners are responsible for hearing and determining all contested cases, conducting informal conferences, approving settlements, and hearing appeals. In their quasi-judicial role, Commissioners conduct legal proceedings throughout the state.

It is the responsibility of the Commission to administer the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Act, found in Title 42 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina. In accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, the Commission also promulgates rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of Title 42.



For administrative purposes, the state is divided into seven districts. Commissioners are assigned to a district for a period of two months before being reassigned to another district. During the course of a fourteen month period, the commissioners serve in each of the state's forty-six counties.

Executive Director

The day-to-day administration and operation of the Commission is the responsibility of the executive director who is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the seven commissioners acting in their capacity as the board of directors of the agency. The executive director functions as the Commission's chief operating officer.

Under the general supervision and management of the executive director are the Commission's five functional departments: (1) Administration, (2) Claims, (3) Insurance & Medical Services, (4) Judicial, and (5) Information Services. Each department is under the supervision of a director and may be organized into one or more operational divisions.

Administration

The Administration Department is responsible for a variety of internal programs, including finance, budgeting, human resources, purchasing, inventory, facility maintenance, motor vehicles, mail and printing, office services, and affirmative action, as well as administrative operations of the Commission.

Judicial

The Judicial Department is responsible for scheduling contested matters for hearing as well as scheduling informal conferences throughout the state. The department oversees the joining of issues for hearings as well as preparing the docket for Full Commission Reviews. Case preparation in anticipation for a hearing consists of reviewing pleadings, requesting additional documentation from the parties, preparing a case synopsis, and maintaining the docket for Full Commission Panel Appeals.

Claims

Administration and management of injury reports and any resulting claims are the responsibilities of the Claims Department. After an injury is reported to the Claims Department, claims personnel monitor its progress through the system. Individual case records are reviewed to ensure the requirements of the Workers' Compensation Act and the rules and regulations of the Commission are being observed. Conflicts of a non-judicial nature are often resolved in the Claims Department.

Insurance and Medical Services

The Insurance and Medical Services Department is responsible for maintaining and monitoring workers' compensation insurance coverage records for all employers, enforcing compliance with the Act, administering the workers' compensation self-insurance program, establishing payment systems and fee schedules for medical providers, and resolving disputed medical bills. The Coverage Division maintains insurance records for employers who purchase coverage from commercial insurance carriers. The responsibility for investigating uninsured employers to determine if they are subject to the workers' compensation law is the responsibility of the Compliance Division. Under certain conditions, South Carolina employers may self-insure against losses resulting from on-the-job injuries. Qualifying and regulating the self-insured employers is the responsibility of the Self-Insurance Division. The department's Medical Services Division is responsible for maintaining the fee schedule that regulates charges by doctors and hospitals and for approving various fees and charges in accordance with the established schedules.

Information Services

The Information Services Department is responsible for the coordination and management of the flow of information throughout the Commission; responsible for all the data processing and information systems development and maintenance. The department also provides statistical reports and a framework for tracking data to each department.

10. Your Expenditures/Appropriations Chart

Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations						
Major Budget Categories	FY 07-08 Actual Expenditures		FY 08-09 Actual Expenditures		FY 09-10 Appropriations Act	
	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds
Personal Service	\$2,997,981	\$2,246,846	\$3,111,338	\$2,846,319	\$2,667,814	\$1,938,569
Other Operating	\$1,447,485	\$524,785	\$1,410,554	(\$5)	\$1,251,237	\$34,608
Special Items	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Miscellaneous Operations	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	0-
Case Services	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Distributions to Subdivisions	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Fringe Benefits	\$834,358	\$658,067	\$938,959	\$693,117	\$721,406	\$567,280
Non-recurring	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
Total	\$5,279,824	\$3,429,698	\$5,460,851	\$4,640,457	\$4,640,457	\$2,540,457

Other Expenditures		
Sources of Funds	FY 07-08 Actual Expenditures	FY 08-09 Actual Expenditures
Supplemental Bills	0	0
Capital Reserve Funds	\$46,399	\$432,673
Bonds	0	0

11. Your Major Program Areas Chart

Program Number and Title	Major Program Area Purpose	FY 07-08 Budget Expenditures	FY 08-09 Budget Expenditures	Key Cross References
Claims	Provides a timely system of benefits to injured workers	State: \$399,064 Federal: \$ Other: \$218,078 Total: \$617,142 12% of Total Budget	State: \$289,792 Federal: \$ Other: \$303,094 Total: \$592,886 10% of Total Budget	Graph: 7.2
Judicial (Management)	Assess and docket all claims requiring mediation, adjudication or appellate review	State: \$179,842 Federal: \$ Other: \$303,280 Total: \$483,122 9% of Total Budget	State: \$144,208 Federal: \$ Other: \$322,179 Total: \$466,387 8% of Total Budget	Graph: 7.5(a) 7.5(b), 7.5(c)
Judicial (Commissioners)	Conduct all single and Full Commission hearings	State: \$1,096,578 Federal: \$ Other: \$366,146 Total: \$1,462,724 27% of Total Budget	State: \$1,088,010 Federal: \$ Other: \$510,628 Total: \$1,598,638 27% of Total Budget	Graph: 7.5(a) 7.5(c)
Insurance & Medical Services	Assure availability of workers' compensation benefits to injured workers, provide employers a self insurance alternative and contain medical costs	State: \$285,216 Federal: \$ Other: \$246,152 Total: \$531,368 10% of Total Budget	State: \$233,815 Federal: \$ Other: \$341,773 Total: \$575,588 10% of Total Budget	Graph: 7.3(a) 7.3(b)
Administration	Oversee all administrative operations	State: \$1,468,998 Federal: \$ Other: \$712,031 Total: \$2,181,029 41% of Total Budget	State: \$1,090,494 Federal: \$ Other: \$1,136,858 Total: \$2,227,352 38% of Total Budget	Graph:

Remainder of Expenditures	FY 07-08 State:		FY 08-09 State:	
	Federal:		Federal:	
	Other:	\$46,399	Other:	\$432,673
	Total:	\$46,399	Total:	\$432,673
	1% of Total Budget:		7% of Total Budget:	

Section III – Elements of Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria

Category 1 – Senior Leadership, Governance and Social Responsibility

- 1. How do senior leaders set, deploy, and ensure two-way communication for: a) short and long term direction and organizational priorities, (b) performance expectations, (c) organizational values, and (d) ethical behavior?**

Executive staff meets bi-weekly to discuss long and short-term direction and performance expectations. The environment of these meetings is one of open communication and mutual contribution toward achieving desired successes. Executive leaders conduct similar meetings within their respective departments to maintain open lines of communication, encourage input from employees and increase interaction between management and employees. Organizational priorities are communicated through the strategic planning process. This is revisited and reinforced in senior leadership staff meetings and through communication to the Commission in the monthly Full Commission Business Meetings.

Organizational values are communicated to employees and customers through a display in each department of the Commission’s vision and mission statements, along with the department’s individual mission statement. This serves to continuously apprise all employees, customers and stakeholders of the standards this organization and its employees strive to achieve.

Executive leadership works to foster individual productivity and communication through one-on-one conferences. Each department has established job notebooks that outline desk procedures and work processes. While these manuals assist in providing on-the-job training for new employees and cross-training for current employees, they also provide a reference point for review of procedures and work processes. In addition, the Commission encourages its employees to participate in training and other educational initiatives. External training opportunities are routinely communicated to all employees and the agency supports employee efforts to participate and attend such functions.

Commissioners are bound by the Code of Judicial Conduct as contained in Rule 501 of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules which requires commissioners and their administrative assistants annually attend a workshop of at least three continuing education hours concerning ethics and the Administrative Procedures Act.

- 2. How do senior leaders establish and promote a focus on customers and other stakeholders?**

The Commission has identified its two most important customer groups: South Carolina’s employers and their employees. Senior leadership has established and promoted a focus on customers by defining acceptable practice and ensuring all staff members are responsive, competent and courteous. Both the Chairman and Executive Director maintain an “open door” policy of availability to everyone, internally and externally.

3. How does the organization address the current and potential impact on the public of its products, program, services, facilities and operations, including associated risks?

The Commission remains current in its review of comparative national studies conducted on workers' compensation, and the impact of the system on costs and benefits. The Commission monitors case law and our senior leadership analyzes the impact of proposed legislation. The Commission also provides information and analysis to committees and members of the General Assembly upon request.

The Commission carefully reviews the impact of system-wide changes, including those involving the processing of hearing and informal conference requests as well as those contained in medical fee schedules.

4. How do senior leaders maintain fiscal, legal and regulatory accountability?

As a means to fiscal accountability, all expenditures must be approved by the Executive Director prior to any purchase. No vacant positions are posted without prior approval of the Executive Director and the Chairman. Executive leadership is responsible for communicating statutory requirements to staff and ensuring staff meets these requirements. The Commission is audited on an annual basis by the State Auditors office and uses the audit findings to evaluate fiscal opportunities and strengths. In addition, each department provides the Executive Director and Commissioners with a monthly report tracking the productivity and efficiency of their departments. Each department director is also available at the monthly business meeting to address Commissioner questions and report project updates. Financial statements indicating actual revenues and expenditures compared to budget amounts are also provided to Commissioners monthly.

5. What key performance measures do senior leaders review to inform them of needed actions? (actual results are to be reported in category 7)

The primary key performance measure reviewed by senior leadership is the time element involved in setting contested cases for hearing and the timely scheduling of appellate reviews. Another key measure is the amount of time involved in reviewing and recording injury reports. Senior leadership also monitors the time factor in verification of workers' compensation coverage and properly receiving all taxes due to the State. Fine assessments and collections are indicators of compliance with the Workers' Compensation Act. They are also used to determine the educational needs of constituents.

6. How do senior leaders use organizational performance review findings and employee feedback to improve their own leadership effectiveness, the effectiveness of management throughout the organization including the head of the organization,

and the governance board/policy making body? How do their personal actions reflect a commitment to the organizational values?

Senior staff has used performance review findings to modify operations, and in certain cases, modify organizational structure to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission's operations. Their effectiveness as leaders is an important aspect of our employee performance review system and is discussed during both the planning and evaluation stages of each managers performance review. All our managers are "working managers", closely involved in the day-to-operations of the Commission. As such, they have the opportunity to receive feedback from employees on a continual basis and make improvements throughout the year.

7. How do senior leaders promote and personally participate in succession planning and the development of future leaders?

Our recruitment and training program, developed by our Department Directors and Executive Director, has been specifically designed to meet the agency's needs. We also have worked with other agencies, such as the State Division of Information Technology, in bringing on board the information technology expertise we need in transitioning to a new computer system. The Commission is also reviewing the tenure of management and supervisors and is in the initial stages of identifying departmental succession needs.

8. How do senior leaders create an environment for performance improvement and the accomplishment of strategic objectives?

All performance improvement must be based on the collection and analysis of good data. Whether it involves our hearing or appellate processes, or our various claims administration seminars, the Commission continually reviews its basic performance data. We also have continued to improve and enhance our data collection for all our operations. This information is reviewed and discussed both at the senior staff level, primarily at our executive staff meetings, and also at the Commissioner level during our monthly Full Commission Business Meetings.

9. How do senior leaders create an environment for organizational and workforce learning?

Training remains an important area to the Commission. The review of training needs and consideration of relevant training opportunities for all employees is ongoing. In addition to individual specific training, to the extent feasible employees attend workers' compensation seminars hosted by the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Educational Association, the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators, International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions, and the National Council on Compensation Insurance among others.

Given the number of new projects, training has remained a key to increasing the agency's productivity, particularly in the information technology arena which reflects the many changes to our business processes.

10. How do senior leaders communicate with, engage, empower and motivate the entire workforce throughout the organization? How do senior leaders take an active role in reward and recognition processes to reinforce high performance throughout the organization?

All performance improvement must be based on the collection and analysis of good data. Whether it involves our hearing or appellate processes, or our various claims administration seminars, the Commission continually reviews its basic performance data. We also have continued to improve and enhance our data collection for all our operations. This information is reviewed and discussed at both the senior staff level, primarily at our executive staff meetings, and also at the Commissioner level during our month Full Commission Business Meetings.

11. How do senior leaders actively support and strengthen the communities in which your organization operates? Include how senior leaders determine areas of emphasis for organizational involvement and support, and how senior leaders, the workforce, and the organization contribute to improving these communities.

The Commission is a long-term supporter of the United Way. Commission employees also sit on various boards and associations, such as the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Educational Association, the International Association of Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions, the Southern Association of Workers' Compensation Administrators, the Columbia Development Corporation, the Richland/Lexington Carolina Alumni Council and the South Carolina Bar.

The community at large receives the benefits of our employees giving spirit through the programs listed below.

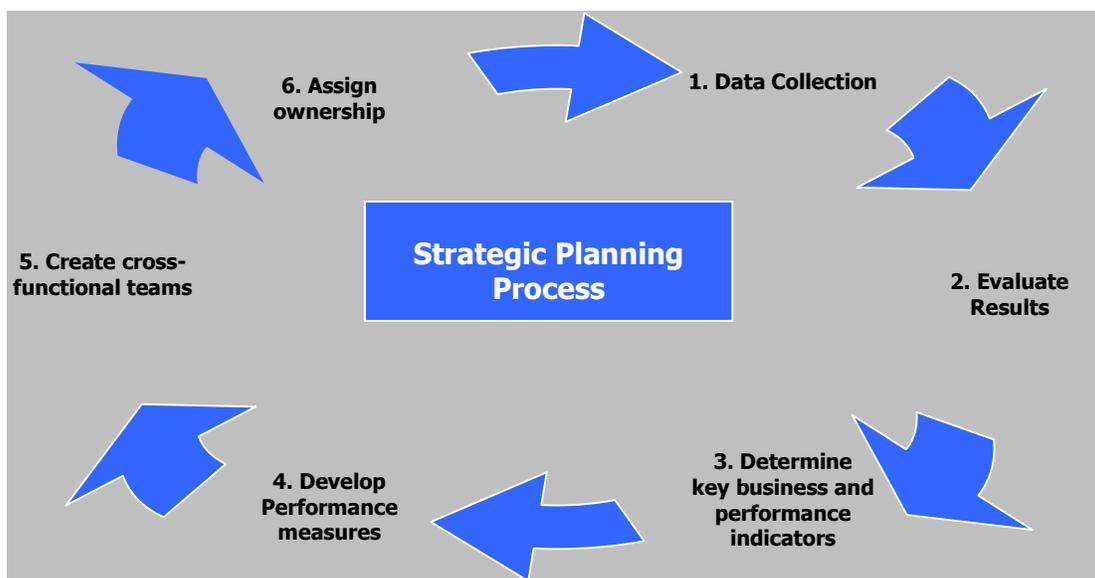
- Church boards
- Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
- Red Cross Blood Drive
- Girl and Boy Scouts
- Sistercare
- Oliver Gospel Mission
- Harvest Hope Food Bank
- Kids Chance

Category 2 - Strategic Planning

- 1. What is your strategic planning process, including key participants, and how does it address: a) your organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; b) financial, regulatory, societal and other potential threats; c) shifts in technology and customer preference; d) workforce capabilities and needs; e) organizational continuity in emergencies; f) your ability to execute the strategic plan.**

The Commission seeks to ensure its strategic planning efforts are in accordance with the vision and mission of the agency. The strategic planning cycle diagram reflects this continuous planning process. The six step strategic planning process is used by the Commission on an annual basis to develop a blueprint of the agency's annual goals and the means of obtaining these goals. Good data is essential to the strategic planning process and the Commission's new computer system is an evolving and intricate part of having good data. When planning, the Commission uses data collection to evaluate current processes. This has been extremely helpful in the hearing and informal conference scheduling process. Evaluating the results of the data collected in these areas has assisted the commission in determining how best to allocate hearings throughout the state to prevent a backlog within the system and schedule hearings in a timely manner.

Cross-functional teams were created during the initial phase of the strategic planning process to charge employees with examining programs and work processes. As a result, the Commission first identified its key business drivers and key performance measures. The development of performance measures helps the Commission track and evaluate its progress, opportunities, and significant achievements. The Commission also established and implemented individual staff development plans as guided by key business indicators. An ongoing effort has been made to refine key business drivers and gather baseline data to present as part of the Accountability Report.



2. How do your strategic objectives address the strategic challenges you identified in you Executive Summary?

The Commission has allocated funding for Phase II of a multi-year project. This entails expanding information received from insurance carriers through Electronic Data Interface, limited access to the agency claims database and a comprehensive electronic document management system. The Division of State Information Technology has contributed to these efforts by allowing the Commission to join other agencies in purchasing software licenses, modules and training programs which have resulted in cost savings. Collaborating needs with other agencies and dividing purchasing, training and licensing cost has been fiscally rewarding. Reorganization related to changing workflow processes is a strategic challenge the Commission has been proactive in addressing. Employee involvement in the decision making process has provided a knowledge base regarding upcoming changes. This has allowed for executive staff members to address employee concerns and inquiries and has also served as a vehicle for engaging all employees in the process of becoming technologically current in our businesses processes. Assigning departmental ownership of development needs has also helped in transitioning from a manual paper processing system to one that is imaging and electronic document management driven.

3. How do you develop and track action plans that address your strategic objectives? Include how you allocate resources to ensure accomplishment of your action plan.

The Commission's Strategic Plan centers around seven overall agency goals. Action plans are developed using input from senior leadership, Commissioners and employees of the respective departments. Once developed, task are assigned to the appropriate department and monitored by the Executive Director and Department Director. Updates are provided to senior leadership in staff meetings to allow for modification and refinement. Senior staff is committed to revisiting the strategic planning and development process, pursuant to the Malcolm Baldrige criteria to further the processes necessary for the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Commission to carry out its mission.

4. How do you communicate and deploy your strategic objectives, action plans, and related performance measures?

Once the action plans are developed, they are disseminated to all agency employees and communicated to the employees by Department Directors, the Executive Director and through agency wide meetings. Departmental meetings are necessary to outline the department's process for completing any assigned action plan.

5. How do you measure progress on your action plan?

Progress is measured bi-weekly on plans involving all departments. For those areas, process times are important. Progress with specific projects, such as the development and implementation of the new computer system, is reviewed on a weekly basis.

6. How do you evaluate and improve your strategic planning process?

Evaluation of our planning process is done on a continual basis. While the process is reviewed when we prepare both our Accountability Report and Annual Report, we do review and make changes throughout the year. For example, the collection of data is central to our strategic planning process and, with the development of our new imaging system, we have spent several months working on the identification of data elements and the development of key reports. Both give the Commission a stronger and more efficient planning process.

7. If the agency’s strategic plan is available to the public through the agency’s internet homepage, please provide a website address for that plan.

The strategic plan is not currently listed on the Agency’s website.

Strategic Planning

Program Title	Supported agency strategic planning goal/objective	Related FY 08-09 key agency action plans/initiative(s)	Key cross references for performance measures
Medical Services	Contain medical cost while preserving access to quality medical care	Monitor hospital inpatient and out patient charges and payment	Graph: 7.4(a)
Self-Insurance	Monitor the financial conditions of all self-insured funds and self-insured corporations	Monitor number of self-insured Employers and the self-insurance tax collected. Audit self-insureds quarterly	Graph: 7.3(a), 7.3(b), 7.3(c)
Coverage	Ensure all employers comply with the Workers’ Compensation Act when reporting coverage	Administer fines for non compliance. Obtain compliance agreements from employers.	Graph: 7.6
Claims	Review all settlements and initial payment notices within one day	Measure the process cycle time to complete reviews	Graph: 7.2
Judicial	Docket all requests for Full Commission review	Utilize business application that schedules request within forty-five days of filing	Graph: 7.5(a)
Judicial	Monitor appeals to higher courts	Receive notice of appeal from higher courts	Graph: 7.1
Judicial	Docket all request for informal conference	Utilize business application that schedules requests within three days of receipt	Graph: 7.5(b)
Judicial	Docket all single commission hearing requests	Utilize business application that schedules all requests within sixty days	Graph: 7.5(c)

Category 3 – Customer Focus

1. How do you determine who your customers are and what their key requirements are?

Key customers are determined based on state legislative requirements and eligibility. Based on the Workers' Compensation Act, the Commission has identified its two most important customers: South Carolina employers and their employees. Because the Commission is a quasi-judicial and a regulatory agency, these two groups comprise the largest number of customers with whom the Commission interacts. Other customers are identified based upon their specific needs and relationship to the workers' compensation system. Other customers and stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- South Carolina's Congressional delegation;
- State Legislators;
- Insurance companies;
- Self-insured funds;
- Third-party administrators;
- Attorneys;
- Physicians;
- Hospitals;
- Other state workers' compensation agencies;
- Department of Commerce;
- Employment Security Commission;
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- State Attorney General's office;
- State Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation;
- Uninsured Employers Fund and the Second Injury Fund;
- FBI and the U.S. Office of the Attorney General;
- Social Security Administration; and,
- State Accident Fund;
- Department of Insurance

2. How do you keep your listening and learning methods current with changing customer/business needs and expectations?

The Commission is committed to providing an environment to foster communication and education among its stakeholders. As a result, the Commission held a one day seminar on claims management. The Commission also teamed up with the Educational Association to co-sponsor the 30th Annual Worker's Compensation Medical Seminar, a three-day event devoted to medical issues relevant to workers' compensation. Requests for public comment and public hearings took place in an effort to receive feedback from constituents on several topics. Proposed regulation changes, increases in the allowable charge amount for independent medical evaluations and the review of the medical fee

schedule are areas in which public input was requested by the Commission.

3. What are your key customers access mechanisms, and how do these access mechanisms enable customers to seek information, conduct business and make complaints?

Commission employees are routinely asked to present at other seminars or conduct presentations on various subjects to outside organizations and groups. A request for a speaker is always honored. Questions and answer sessions at the end of each presentation if a means of receiving feedback and communicating with constituents. In addition, employers and insurance carriers routinely request training on proper procedures be conducted at their worksite, and the Commission readily supplies an employee to provide the proper training. The evaluations and feedback received are used as a basis to further improve our services. The Commission also has an Ombudsman who is responsible for responding to constituent complaints. The Ombudsman does not offer legal advice but serves as a resource for all parties to a claim to gain knowledge about their rights and responsibilities under the Workers' Compensation Act.

4. How do you measure customer/stakeholder satisfaction and dissatisfaction and use this information to improve?

In order to measure the level of customer satisfaction, Commission employees routinely follow-up with stakeholders. The Commission also has a survey and an anonymous suggestion box on the agency website.

5. How do you use information and feedback from customers/stakeholders to keep services or programs relevant and provide for continuous improvement?

The Claims Administration program is evaluated on a bi-annual basis. Feedback, question and survey results from the seminar are discussed by the executive staff and seminar speakers. Particular areas of interests that are expressed at the seminar are addressed and then worked in for discussion at the next seminar. A legislative update, change in regulations and process improvement initiatives are also discussed with attendees. This feedback serves as a intricate tool in determining the type of information stakeholders are seeking and their preferred method of receiving it.

6. How do you build positive relationships with customers and stakeholders to meet and exceed their expectations? Indicate any key distinctions between different customer and stakeholder groups.

The Commission has developed, and continues to expand, a website that allows stakeholders to obtain information regarding the Workers' Compensation Commission. In

addition, stakeholders may initiate contact with the agency through the use of an e-mail system where questions, complaints, and concerns can be submitted to any department, including the Executive Director and the Chairman. Responses are usually made within 24 hours of the receipt of the inquiry.

A variety of methods are used to determine the needs and expectations of stakeholders and to provide a means of communication with the Commission, including:

- Telephone and written correspondence;
- Participation in public forums;
- Monitoring legislative activity;
- Stakeholder visits;
- Informational brochures;
- Publication of the Commission's Annual Report;
- Sponsored conferences,
- Publication of workers' compensation system information;
- Agency website and;
- On-line communication

The majority of Commission employees have routine, daily contact with stakeholders. Executive staff members continuously emphasize the importance of quality customer service.

Category 4 – Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management

1. How do you decide which operations, processes and systems to measure for tracking financial and operational performance, including progress relative to strategic objectives and action plans?

For the past several years, the Commission has had in place a performance based measurement system consisting of a number of identified business drivers and measures. The measurement system is designed to assist in setting goals and to integrate those goals with budgetary requests and considerations, staffing levels and efficiency levels. Thirty-five performance measures have been identified, and information is gathered on a weekly, monthly or annual basis. Those measurements are a result of input from the users of the workers' compensation system, both internally and externally.

The Commission looks to our stakeholders, including South Carolina employers and their employees, insurance carriers, third-party administrators, self-insured funds, attorneys, physicians, hospitals, the General Assembly, the Governor's Office, and other state agencies to help us identify those measures that reflect the productivity of the Commission and the satisfaction of the stakeholder. The Commission's scorecard of performance measures includes process cycle times and time necessary to resolve issues of concern and customer satisfaction.

The Commission has been able to establish activity-based costing to determine the cost associated with several of our processes. This includes cost associated with processing a hearing request; conducting a hearing; conducting an informal conference; and processing and collecting fines to ensure compliance. In addition, comparison of workload measures with past or expected performance allows executive staff members to make adjustments to processes and provide a means for improvement of services.

A number of performance measures are geared toward customer expectations. One of these measures is the process cycle time for setting various types of hearings. For many injured employees economic viability is at stake following an on-the-job injury and a shorter wait for a hearing is a key indicator of customer service and satisfaction. During the fiscal year, the process cycle time for setting a hearing for the injured employee has decreased from approximately four months to an average of three months in each of the seven districts. This time includes the mandatory thirty day notice of hearing.

2. How do you select, collect, align, and integrate data/information for analysis to provide effective support for decision making and innovation throughout your organization?

The Commission has used data analysis in several areas. First it is used to measure the process times for single commissioner hearings and appellate hearings. This analysis is conducted monthly. It is also used in our annual report with regard to frequency of work-related accidents and the indemnity and medical costs associated with those accidents.

Data analysis also plays an important role in the development of new medical provider fee schedules. The Commission has been fortunate to have the assistance of the Budget & Control Board's Office of Research and Statistics in conducting cost and severity analysis of hospital claims. Over the last ten years this analysis has played an important role in the Commission's setting of medical care prices.

3. What are your key measures, how do you review them, and how do you keep them current with organizational service needs and direction?

Key measures are the process times for single commissioner hearings and appellate hearings; number of claims filed, number of claims closed, indemnity costs, medical costs and files reviewed, among others. Process times are reviewed monthly and primarily encompass the time from when a hearing request is received to the time the hearing is held and the order issued. Claims costs, including indemnity and medical, are reviewed annually. Other measures generally are reviewed monthly or quarterly. The monthly review of process measures allows the Commission to make adjustments in the hearing schedule in order to ensure hearings are held on a timely basis.

4. How do you select and use key comparative data and information to support operational and strategic decision making and innovation?

Data is selected primarily to compare the Commission's operations from year-to-year. We have tracked our operations based on various process times, e.g. the waiting time for a hearing and the waiting time for an appeal. We also track the number of cases filed and total expenditures over time. While this gives the Commission the ability to track its operations over time, it is difficult to compare our operations with other workers' compensation agencies because of differences in workers' compensation laws across the country.

5. How do you ensure data integrity, reliability, timeliness, accuracy, security, and availability for decision making?

Data integrity and timeliness were an issue with our old information system. With the development and implementation of the new system, more data will be received electronically which will help improve data integrity, timeliness and accuracy. Security issues have been resolved by placing our system within the Budget & Control Board Division of State Information Technology.

6. How do you translate organizational performance review findings into priorities for continuous improvement?

Our monthly review of the timeliness of hearings and any potential backlog, keeps our

performance in that area clearly within our view. Adjustments are made to our hearing schedule to keep our performance within the desired range. For example, for appellate hearings, our monthly tracking of process time resulted in scheduling more days for these reviews, increasing the number of hearings the Commission could conduct.

7. How do you collect, transfer, and maintain, organization and workforce knowledge (your knowledge assets)? How do you identify, share and implement best practices, as appropriate?

On a very basic level, each department has established desk procedures outlining job and work processes. While these manuals assist in providing on-the-job training for new employees and cross-training for current employees, they also provide a reference point for the review of all job and work processes. In some of our technical areas, such as our Medical Services Division and our Self-Insurance Division, we have detailed written operational procedures. In addition, every department and position has a detailed workflow plan that provides detailed description of the workflow process.

Category 5 – Work Force Focus

- 1 How does management organize and measure work: to enable employees to enable your workforce to: 1) develop to their full potential, aligned with the organization’s objectives, strategies, and action plans; and 2) promote cooperation, initiative, empowerment, teamwork, innovation and your organizational culture?**

The Commission has developed a comprehensive list of policies and procedures, as well as desk procedures for each position. This enables each employee to have a clear understanding of the purpose of the Commission, their department and their job. The Commission also has established a comprehensive training program for all departments and personnel, with each employee’s training for the year determined by that employee and their department director. The Commission has tailored training based on the agency’s needs along with the individual employee’s. For example, this past year all management personnel completed the Budget & Control Board’s Office of Human Resources’ four day supervisory training. Others received mediation training and everyone received additional training in customer service. The Commission will continue to develop these plans on an annual basis.

- 2. How do you achieve effective communication and knowledge/skill/best practices sharing across departments, jobs and locations? Give examples.**

The Commission communicates effectively through weekly department meeting with staff, bi-weekly meeting with executive staff members and monthly Full Commission Business Meeting. Commissioners travel to various locations to conduct hearings three weeks per month. They are all present at the Columbia office the last week of the month and have an “open door” policy. The agency intranet site is also used as a means of communication.

- 3. How does management, recruit, hire, place and retain new employees? Describe any barriers that you may encounter.**

Neogov is the state government’s e-recruitment system and is a "one stop shop" for applicants when applying for jobs with the state of South Carolina. Previously, the public could use the state's employment website to view jobs available within the state, but in order to apply, a state application was completed manually and submitted to the prospective agency accordingly (via fax or regular mail). Neogov has made the application process easier for the public to navigate and for the agency to review. The applications may be saved from the website description, making it easier to identify qualified applicants. This electronic application process makes it very easy for anyone who has computer access to submit an application. Oftentimes, several hundreds

applications are received for job postings depending on the length of time the position is posted. This can make the process of narrowing the applicant pool more difficult and time consuming.

4. How do you assess your workforce capability and capacity needs, including skills, competencies and staffing levels?

Capacity needs are determined based on budgetary levels within the agency. If there is an area that needs additional capacity the Commission attempts to utilize temporary employment to handle the deficiencies for the short term. Long term goals shift or realign areas in order to best utilize staffing levels within the agency. Workforce capabilities and skills are accessed as part of the employment process and training is utilized as a means of making sure the workforce is equipped to handle the work of the agency.

5. How does your workforce performance management system, including feedback to and from individual members of the workforce, support high performance work and contribute to the achievement of your action plans?

Expectations and performance are reviewed on a project by project basis. With several major projects just completed or ongoing, for example, Phases I & II of the implementation of the Commission's new electronic information management system, this type of feedback has resulted in better project outcomes since adjustments can be made from one step to the next.

6. How does your development and learning system for leaders address the following: a) development of personal leadership attributes, b) development of organizational knowledge, c) ethical practices, d) your core competencies, strategic challenges, and accomplishment of action plans.

Performance expectations are defined and communicated to employees through the Employee Performance Management System (EPMS). Use of this system allows employees to understand the expectations of the position and how they will be evaluated at the conclusion of the rating period. Each employee's EPMS reflects the agency and respective department's mission statement. The EPMS serves as the primary tool to document employee performance. During the evaluation process, employees and managers are given the opportunity to discuss past performance as well as expectations for future performances, strengths, weaknesses and a guideline for addressing weaknesses.

7. How do you identify and address key developmental and training needs for your workforce, including job skills training, performance excellence

training, diversity training, management/leadership development, new employee orientation, and safety training?

Employee training needs are evaluated no less than annually. The Executive Director and senior staff review the needs of each department and arrange both in-house and outside training to meet those needs. Whether it is further training in workers' compensation, mediation or technical training in a particular subject matter in the use of new software, our training is focused on the needs of the each department and individual. All have an impact on the Commission's ability to meet its action plans.

Training regarding the judicial code of conduct and the ethics act, statutorily required of all commissioners and their administrative assistants, is provided annually.

8. How do you encourage on the job use of new knowledge and skills?

It is our observation that employees remain motivated in their individual efforts if given the opportunity to cross-train and learn new job responsibilities and job skills. Executive staff encourages employees interested in learning about other jobs to participate in cross-training efforts. The Commission encourages its employees in leadership, training, and other educational initiatives. Training opportunities are routinely communicated to all employees, and employees are encouraged to participate and attend.

9. How does employee training contribute to the achievement of your action plans?

Employee training provides staff members with the educational resources, knowledge base and tools necessary to actively participate in agency action plans. It is essential that employees be an integral part of successfully completing action plans and that they are fully equipped to do so.

10. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your workforce and leader training and development systems?

Employees are routinely asked to apply skill sets they have developed while attending continuing education forums. The information obtained is proven to be effective if it assists the employee's navigation through their personal development plan, is applied to their day to day job activities while improving employee efficiency.

11. How do you motivate your workforce to develop and utilize their full potential?

The workload of individual employees has increased. Supervisors and managers provide positive reinforcement to employees who go the extra mile in helping the agency meet its goals and objectives. The key to maximizing employee performance is to ensure jobs are interesting and satisfying. Supervisors and managers are encouraged to meet informally with employees at least once during the EPMS appraisal period to discuss their performance, concerns and provide constructive feedback. The Commission utilizes flexible work schedules to help employees balance their personal and professional lives. The Commission hosts a luncheon each year to honor employees and invites retired and past employees as well. Employee Recognition Week gave the Commission the opportunity to recognize the importance of all employees to the successful achievement of our mission and to honor the Commission Employee of the Year. A catered lunch was held on State Employee Recognition Day to thank all employees for their hard work and dedication.

12. What formal and/or informal assessment methods and measures do you use to obtain information on workforce well-being, satisfaction, and motivation? How do you use other measures such as employee retention and grievances? How do you use this information?

This type of information, as is often the case, is collected informally. The agency relies on discussions between employees and their supervisors to bring up any issues and suggestions to improve the working environment. The Commission's human resources department is also available to assist in this endeavor and to provide information on ongoing educational and career development opportunities.

Agency-wide meetings are used, not only to convey information about current and future issues before the agency, but also to provide all employees the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any important topic.

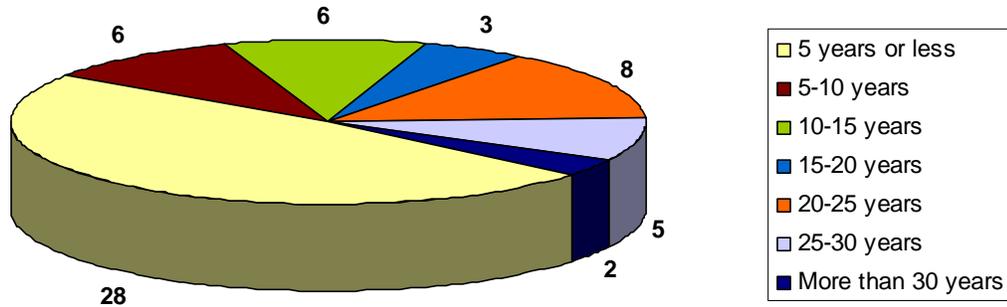
Employee retention has been consistently high over the years

13. How do you manage effective career progression and effective succession planning for your entire workforce throughout the organization?

The Executive Director and executive staff members have taken an active role in the evaluation of succession planning. As referenced in the diagram below the Workers' Compensation Commission currently has fifty-eight employees. Forty-eight percent of the employees have been with the commission for less than five years. Twenty-five percent of employees have been with the Commission for over twenty years. This places the agency in a favorable position when addressing strategic planning initiatives. The career goals and objectives of each employee are discussed on an annual basis. This provides department directors with the opportunity to assist in the professional development of each employee and identify cross-training needs. The knowledge base of senior employees is invaluable to the agency and the agency has taken several initiatives

to ensure that it is documented. Job notebooks and workflow processes serve as references and training tools for all staff members. Every employee has access to this information through the agency intranet site.

Employee Tenure at the Workers' Compensation Commission



14. How do you maintain a safe, secure and healthy work environment? (Include your workplace preparedness for emergencies and disasters).

The Commission maintains a safe and secure work place by having limited access points for visitors. There is a security guard on the premises at all times during working hours.

Category 6 – Process Management

1. How do you determine your organization’s core competencies and how do they relate to your mission, competitive environment and action plans?

The key process is waiting periods for hearing dates. During the last fiscal year, the South Carolina Workers’ Compensation Commission was able to begin an intensive focus on reducing the waiting time for a hearing. The waiting period at that time was approximately four months in each of the seven districts for a single Commissioner hearing. By the end of the fiscal year, waiting time had been reduced to an average of three months in each of the seven districts.

2. How do you determine and what are your key work processes that produce, create or add value for your customers and your organization and how do they relate to your core competencies? How do you ensure these processes are used?

3. How do you incorporate organizational knowledge, new technology, cost control, and other efficiency and effectiveness factors such as cycle time into process design and delivery?

4. How does your day-to-day operation of these processes ensure meeting key performance requirements?

5. How do you systematically evaluate, improve and improve your key product and service related processes?

6. What are your key support processes and how do you improve and update these processes to achieve better performance?

2-6

Processes are all designed with an eye toward delivering superior customer service, fair and impartial dispute resolution, and ensuring statutory compliance with all workers’ compensation laws and regulations. Ease of compliance and reduction in the burden of compliance coupled with the desire to ensure prompt and fair resolution to all parties are key components in any service the Commission delivers. Fiscal Year 07-08 Progress 10 data process enhancements and the development of imaging and scanning capabilities lead to the improvement of many agency business practices. They included:

- The ability to store documents electronically to reduce physical storage requirements
- The ability to email requested documents through imaging

- The ability to review and streamline business process by incorporating imaging into workflow
- The ability to record Periodic Status Report Information , allowing employees to view current benefits being provided as reported by the insurance carrier without having to review the physical file.

South Carolina must have a workers' compensation system that is stable, objectively balanced, competently managed, and cost effective if it is to provide a fair, equitable, and timely system of benefits to injured workers and their employers. The Commission is committed to such a system and evaluates all key products and service related processes.

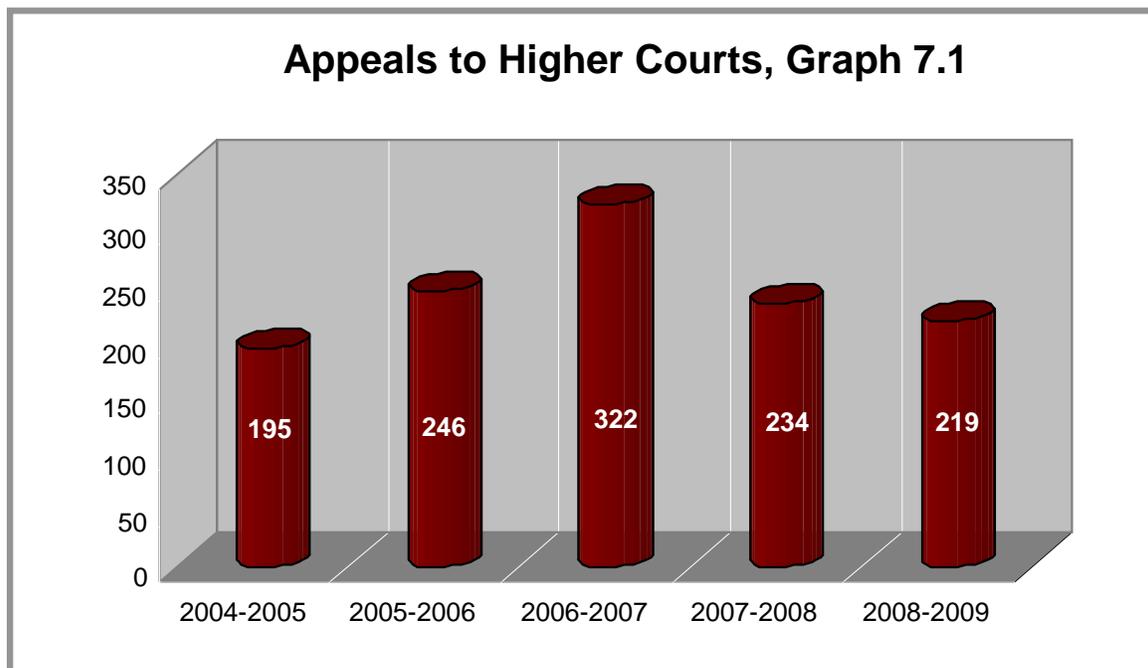
7. How does your organization determine the resources needed to meet current and projected budget and financial obligations?

The organization determines the resources needed to meet current and projected budget and financial obligations by reviewing the current production level data of each division and how it relates to historical production data. Expenditures related to the work production as well as revenues generated by specific segments of the work are analyzed. The Commission reviews historical data for trends, calculates straight line projections for future estimates of work production, and make necessary adjustments considering the economic and political environment in which our agency operates.

Category 7 – Results

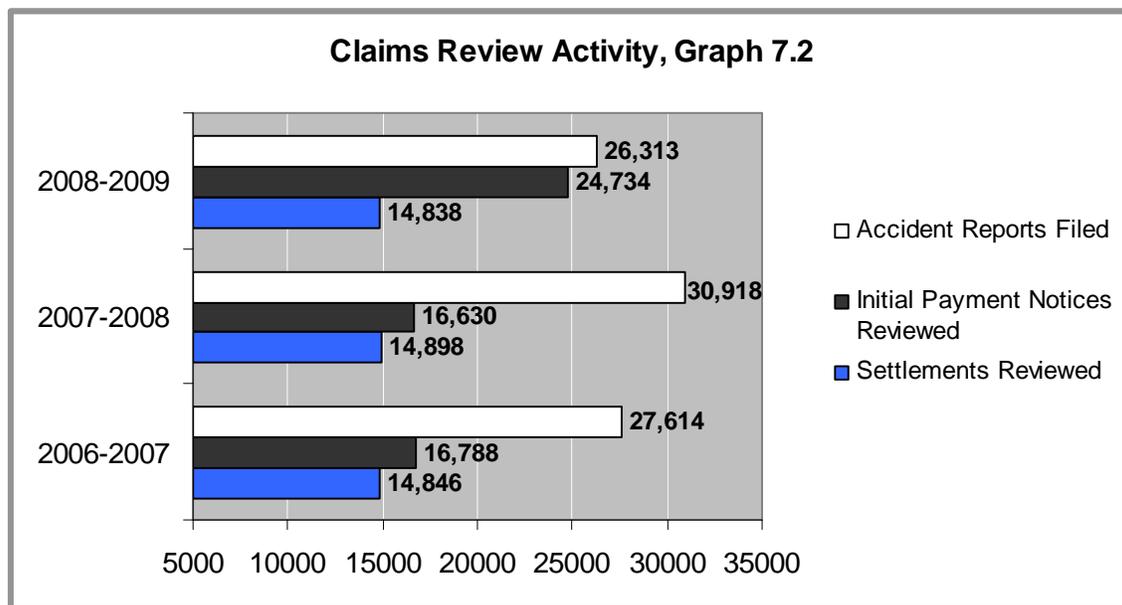
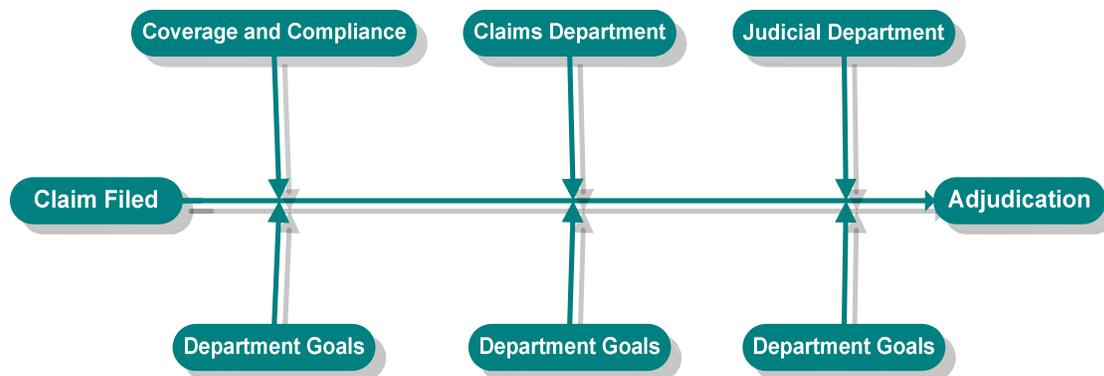
- 1. What are your performance levels and trends for your key measures of mission accomplishment/product and service performance that are important to your customers? How do your results compare to those of comparable organizations?**

The Commission serves as the judicial body for the administration of workers' compensation claims and determination of medical benefits and disability. The worker's compensation judiciary process allows claims to be appealed beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission. Once they have been heard by a single commissioner and appealed to a Full Commission Panel, the decision and order may be appealed to higher court. For accidents with dates of injury prior to July 1, 2007 cases are appealed to the Circuit Court and then to the South Carolina Court of Appeals. Accidents with dates of injury post July 1, 2007 are appealed directly to the Court of Appeals. The historical average of claims appealed beyond the jurisdiction of the Commission is less than 10%. This results in cost savings for the industry, cost savings for the courts, quicker resolution time for the claim and a reduction in the time it takes for benefits to be administered to the claimant.



2. What are your performance levels and trends for your key measures on customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction (a customer is defined as an actual or potential user of your organization’s product or service)? How do your results compare to those of comparable organizations?

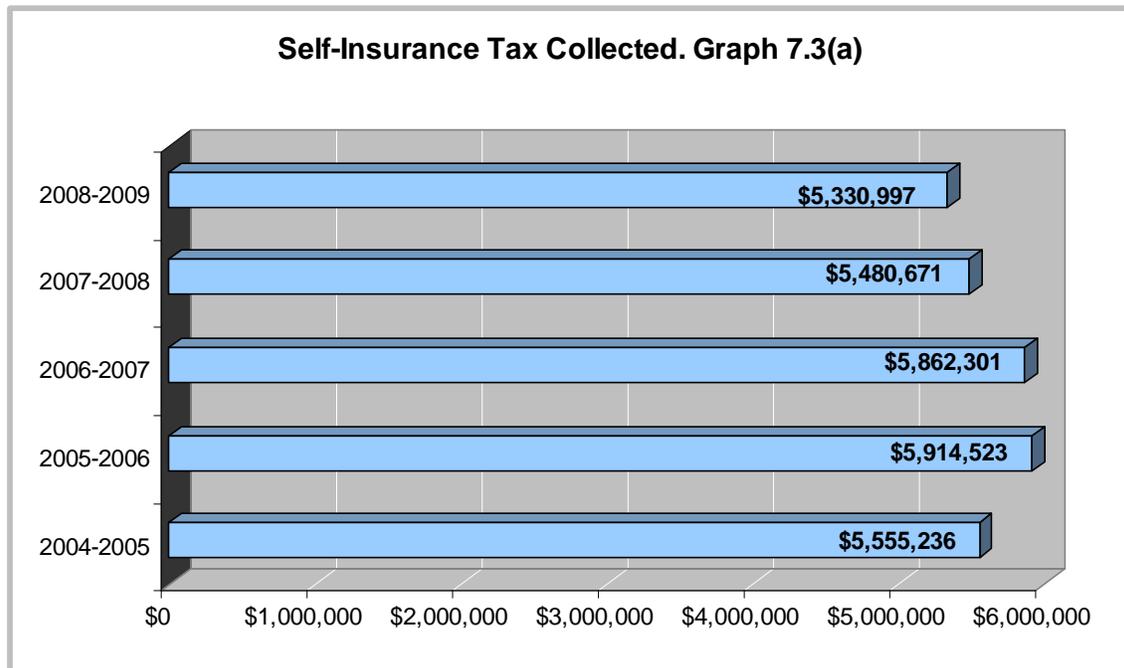
Administering a timely system of benefits for injured workers is a central priority for the Commission. The Commission is unique in nature in that the judicial, claim, coverage and compliance divisions all play an intricate role in claims processing. Although the Commission does not provide employers nor employees with a survey, satisfaction and dissatisfaction can be measured through the departmental efforts to proficiently process their requests.

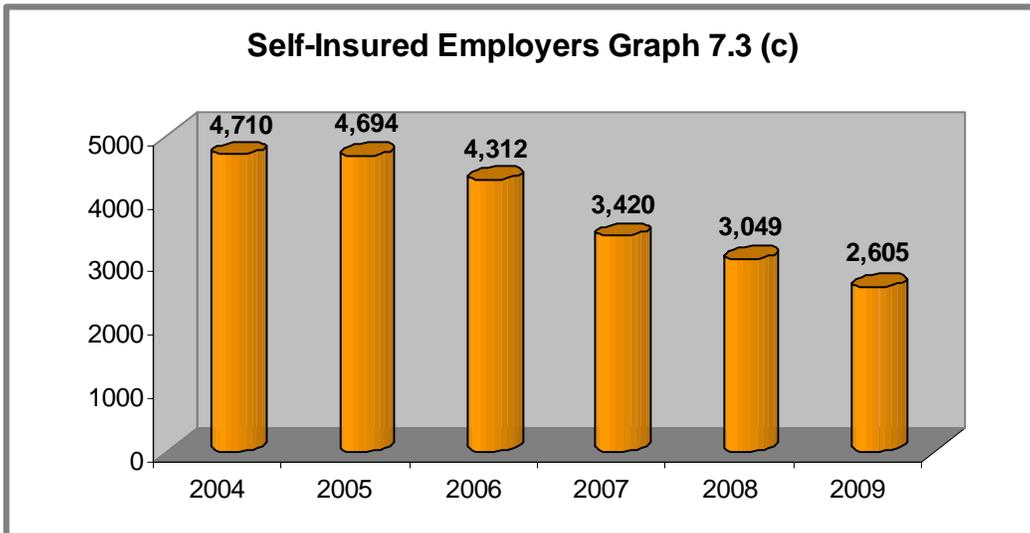
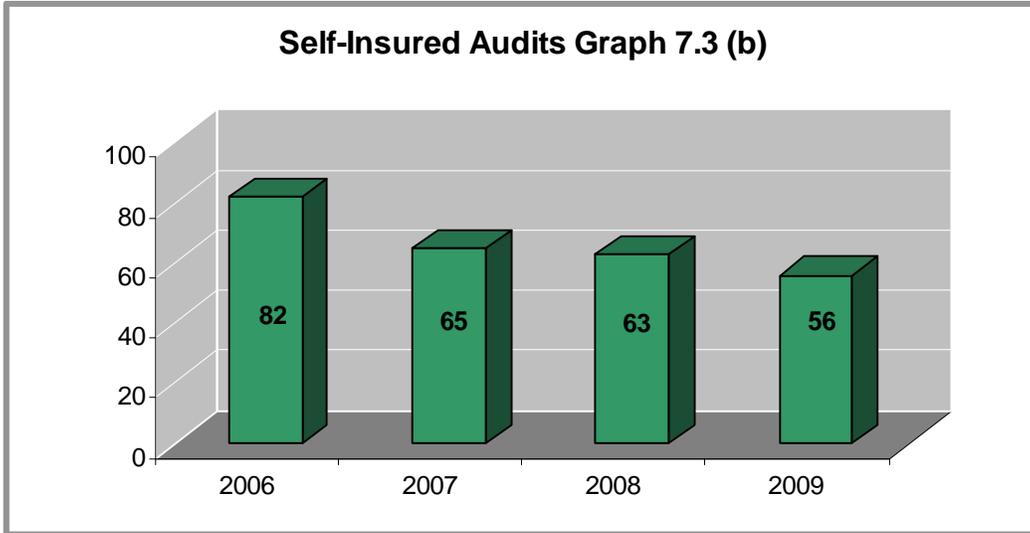


3. What are your performance levels for your key measures on financial performance including measures of cost containment, as appropriate?

Self-Insurance taxes are incurred at the rate of 2.5% of the total paid self-insured program expenses by qualified self-insured employers and self-insured funds. Taxes are collected annually based on the fiscal year of the qualified self-insurer or self-insured fund. Paid self-insured program expenses include but are not limited to medical costs, compensation costs, legal fees, administrative costs, excess insurance premiums, surety fees and Second Injury Fund assessments. The self-insurer can deduct recoveries from the Second Injury Fund and third parties. Self-insurance audits are conducted on all qualified self-insured employers and self-insured funds every two to three years to assure correct reporting of self-insurance taxes. Self-insurance tax collections go to the state's general fund with a portion going to support the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Uninsured Employers Fund.

During FY 08-09, self-insurance taxes decreased from \$5.4 to \$5.3 million. Overall, the number of self-insured employers has decreased over the past four years, decreasing the total number of claims, the total dollar amounts paid (the base for the self-insured tax), and the number of self-insurance audits conducted.





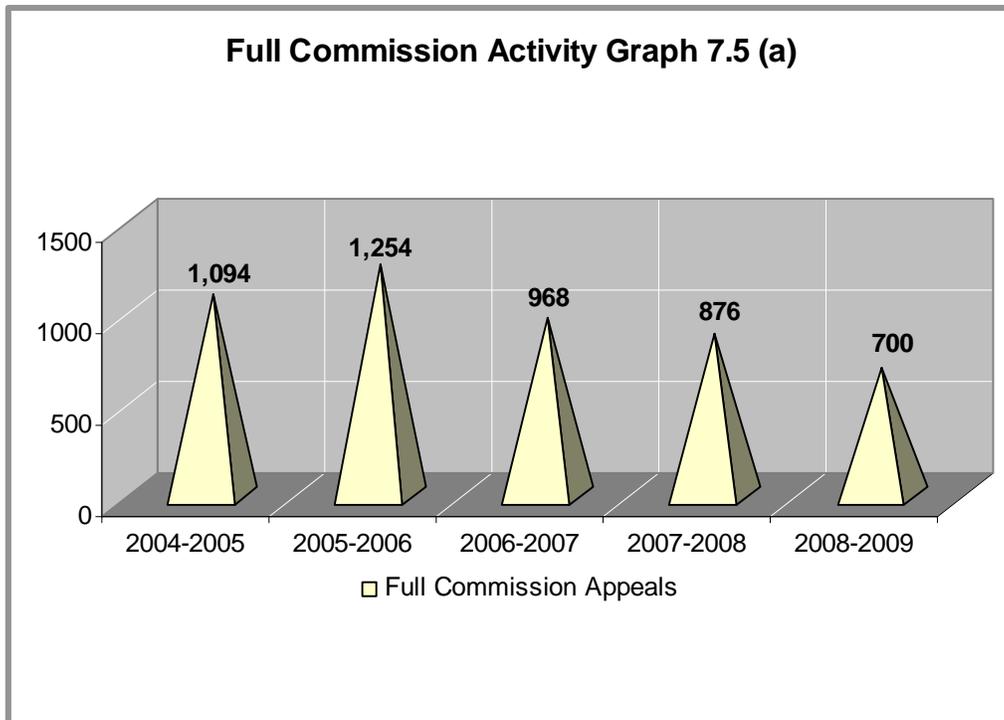
4. What are your performance levels and trends for your key measures of workforce engagement, workforce satisfaction, the development of your workforce, including leaders, workforce retention, workforce climate including workplace health, safety, and security?

Specific measures of workforce engagement and satisfaction have not been developed, however, the Commission has continued to work toward improving all its workforce through continued training, and the further development of its leaders through participation in various management development programs. For example, the Commission has had several staff members graduate from South Carolina's Certified Public Manager Program and several staff members complete the South Carolina Executive Institute. The Commission will continue to foster the development of its leaders through various management development programs.

Overall staff retention has been relatively good with turnover well within expectations. Over workplace health is enhanced through participation in various programs offered by the Employee Insurance Program's Prevention Partners. Prevention Partners provides a comprehensive range of activities, programs, services, and information designed to help state employees and their covered dependents enjoy a happier, healthier life. Part of the Employee Insurance Program focuses on disease prevention, early detection of disease, demand management and health promotion. It also offers educational resources on diverse issues such as diabetes, weight management, stress management, and nutrition. Participation is, of course, voluntary.

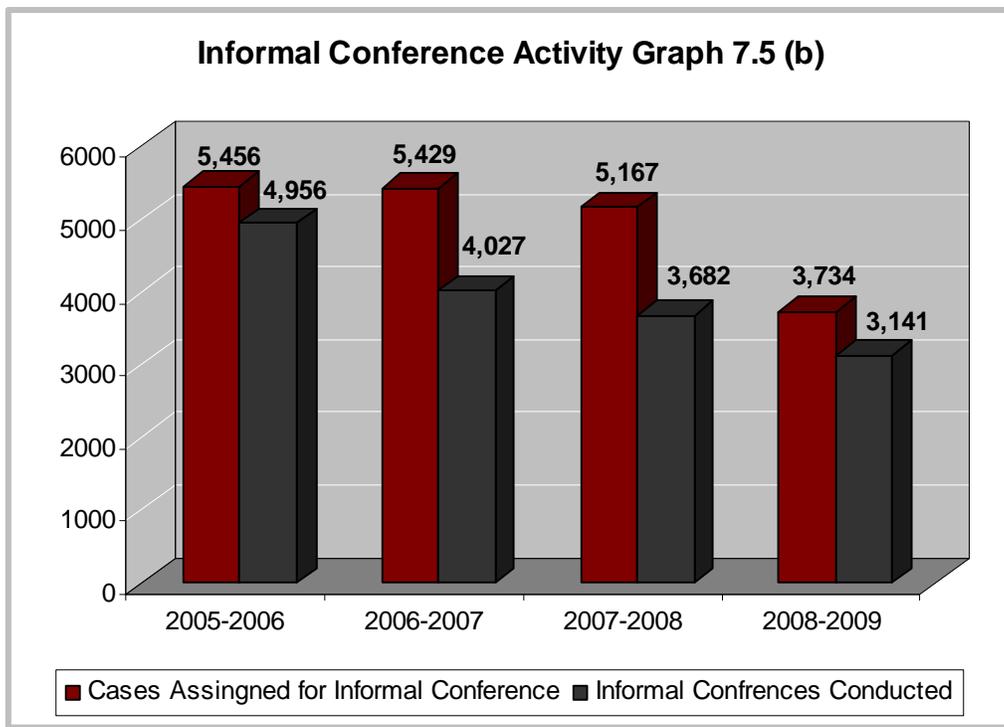
5. What are your performance levels and trends for your key measures of organizational effectiveness/ operational efficiency and work system performance (these could include measures related to the following: product, service and work system innovation rates and improvement results, improvements to cycle time, supplier and partner performance, and results related to emergency drills or exercise) ?

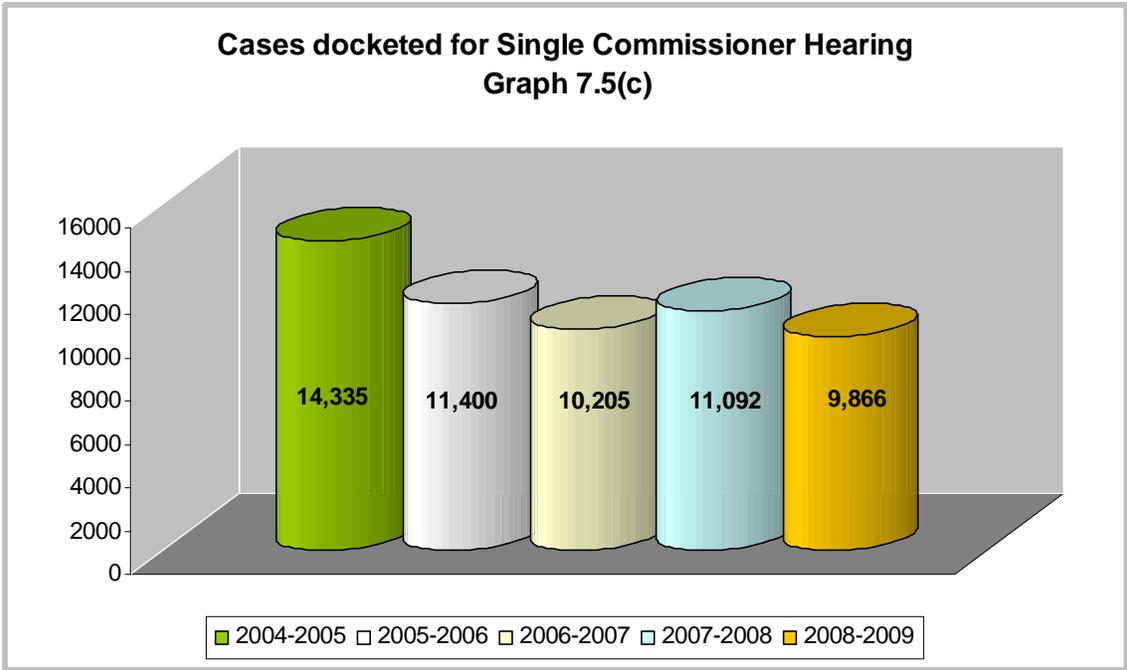
Appeals are heard monthly and prepared for hearing by the Judicial Department of the Commission. The vast majority of cases are heard on review within ninety (90) days of the original Decision and Order. The Appellate Decision and Order is issued within thirty (30) days of oral argument, thus completing the fact finding process of the Commission in an efficient manner within the times constraint of proper notice to all parties.



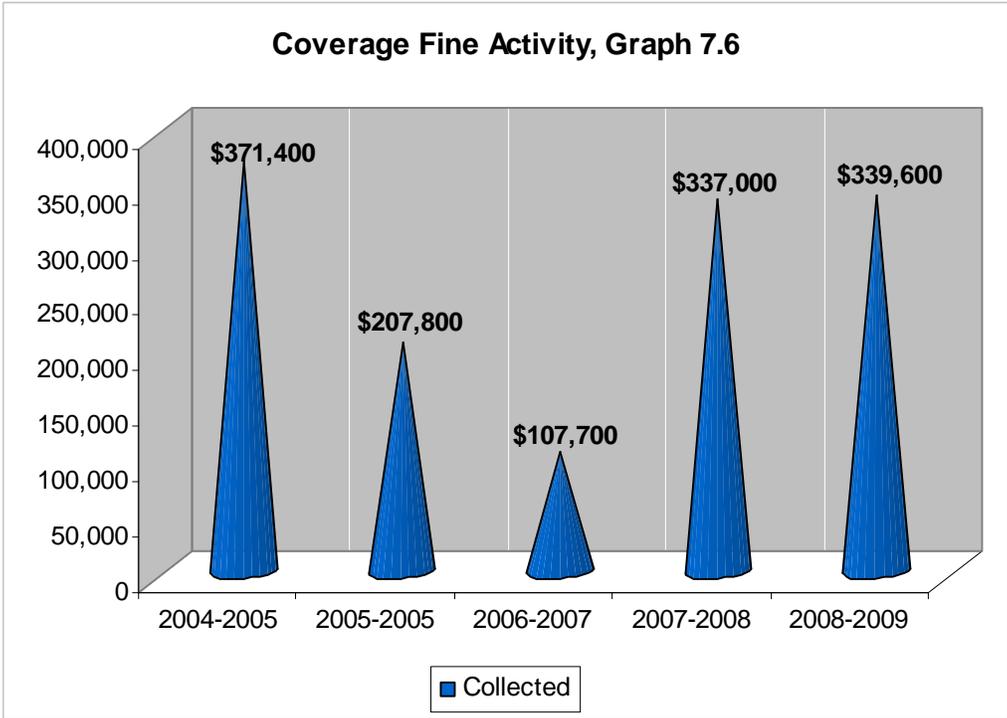
When an injured worker has been released by the treating physician, the parties appear at an informal conference to resolve any pending issues before a Commissioner or a Deputy Commissioner. Both the Claimant and the Employer/Carrier may request an informal conference. The issues are resolved by agreement of the parties. If an agreement is not reached, the case is set for hearing before a Commissioner during the following term. Ninety percent (90%) of cases are resolved in this matter and never go to hearing. This process manages the vast majority of cases at the Commission which have lost time and medical treatment.

When there are contested issues in a case, the matter is set before a Single Commissioner. Decisions and Orders are generally served on the parties within thirty (30) days of the date of hearing. Either party may appeal a Decision and Order of the Commission. Contested hearings comprise only ten percent (10%) of the case load of the Commission.





6. **What are your performance levels and trends for the key measures of regulator/legal compliance and community support? Note: For a governmental agency, this question would apply to compliance with laws and regulation other than the agency’s central legal mandate. Results of the agency’s legal mandate or mission should be addressed in question 7.1.**



Medical Bill Disputes Reviewed and Resolved
Graph 7.4 (a)

