

A new test at Capital Region may help employers find the best jobs for new hires

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Posted: Saturday, Feb 10, 2007

When a prospective employee fills out an application stating they are able to perform the physical duties of a job, the employer had to take their word for it - until now.

Capital Region Medical Center (CRMC) is offering local businesses and industries a way to ensure the applicant can perform the duties through its Physical Capacity Profile Testing System.

"(The system) is a maximum-effort test that tests every part of the body to see how much a person can safely exert themselves," said Jake Luebbering, marketing and sales coordinator in Corporate and Community Services with CRMC.

"It allows employers to see if applicants can safely do the job (for which) they are applying."

Not only does the test give an employers a heads up of an applicants performance abilities, it also could help businesses save money with workers compensation issues.

"If an applicant already has an impairment in one area, that will show up on the test," Luebbering said. "Then, if the employee has an accident at work, according to state law, the company is only required to get the person functioning to the level where they were at before the injury.

"It is important to remember that an impairment cannot be used in the decision not to hire an employee, it will simply allow (the employer) to have a reference for the degree of a previous injury, should the employee get injured at work."

The test is compliant with and has been approved by the American with Disabilities Act and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. It is also HIPPA compliant.

Luebbering said there are three main ways the Physical Capacity Test will benefit employers.

"It will first of all help prevent workplace injuries by matching employees with jobs they can only safely do," he said.

"Second, it will help injured workers return to work safely with less lost work time and lower costs for the employer. And third, it will help the employer comply with new workers compensation laws."



Physical Therapy Supervisor Jason Woods, left, and Physical Therapist Gwen Moe demonstrate the Physical Capacity Profile machine, which enables some employers to determine whether potential new hires are able to meet a job's physical demands, at the Capital Region Healthplex. (Kelley McCall/News Tribune photo)

The test is performed on applicants after a job has been offered to them, much like a post-employment drug screening, which allows the employer to legally rescind the job offer if the employee cannot safely do the job.

The Physical Capacity Test and the implications for not passing it must be included in the employer's human resources policies.

Some companies have already begun to use the system and have started by testing all of their current employees.

The test costs \$85 per employee. Results will be sent to the employer via a secure Web link that requires a password. Results, Luebbering said, are back to the employer within five to 10 minutes.

Physical Capacity Testing was developed by an orthopedic physician who saw a need for testing of this type to help prevent workplace injuries and help employers place employees in jobs they can safely perform.

"The test does not allow for termination if the person has already been performing the job, it will only allow the employer to work with the employee in finding a more suitable position or in helping the employee get to the level they need to be at to safely perform their job duties," Luebbering said.