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## Workers' Comp Costs Rose 21.6%, City Paid \$12.2 Million in '08

By ARI PAUL



LEE CLARKE: City shuns preventive steps.

The Law Department May 1 released a report showing that there was a 3.4-percent increase in the number of city workers receiving Workers' Compensation payments in 2008 from the previous year, raising the concerns of city labor leaders.

Nearly 15,500 city workers received payments last year. The department said that the cost of wage replacement and medical treatment was \$12.2 million, a 21.6-percent increase since 2007.

### HHC, DOE Top List

Five agencies accounted for 78 percent of the claims, the report said: the Health and Hospitals Corporation with 4,052 claims, the Department of Education with 3,044, the Fire Department with 1,925, the Department of Correction with 1,568, and the Police Department with 1,526. These agencies also accounted for 61 percent of Workers' Comp payments in the city workforce

in 2008.

"These numbers demonstrate yet again that the city needs a safety and health program to reduce workplace injuries and illness. These injuries and illnesses can be prevented," said District Council 37 Safety and Health Director Lee Clarke in a statement. "However, the city refuses to analyze data it collects which would allow it to develop programs that target agencies or job titles which have high rates of injury and/or illness. In fact, the city has no program at all designed to systematically reduce workplace injuries and illnesses."

### 'City Should Act to Cut Costs'

She continued, "By targeting unsafe jobs and eliminating hazards, the city could reduce recurring costs in the future, increase worker productivity, job satisfaction and reduce human suffering. The failure of the city to implement a proactive program to reduce the rate of workplace injuries and illnesses is unfortunate. Major corporations throughout the country have reduced their costs of Workers' Compensation premiums by hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars."

Communications Workers of America Local 1180 Vice President Bill Henning, who serves as the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health's chairman, also highlighted the numbers in the report.

"This increase in the number and cost of workplace injuries among city workers is shocking," he said in a statement.



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