

Behind the “Glamorous” Side of Work Comp



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Behind the “Glamorous” Side of Work Comp

The world of sports and entertainment is irresistible, drawing us in with its seductive allure and magnetic appeal. But behind the glitz and glamor, the stakes are high and the risks even higher. When the biggest stars are involved —be they actors, athletes, or the unsung heroes behind the scenes, it becomes a real make-it or break-it scenario. It’s a world where unpredictability reigns supreme, and one misstep can spin the plot in a whole new direction.

Expecting the Unexpected

“While all risk managers have to take into account their location, those in entertainment and sports don’t deal with brick and mortar in the traditional sense. In this unique environment, risk managers regularly explore the differences on a larger scale, between on-location scenarios, including portable or temporary venues, isolated locations, and rural areas where resource access is greatly limited, there is virtually no predictability, except that injuries will occur. There is heightened variability on most fronts.” Zebrah L. Jahnke, Vice President of Business Development at EK Health stated.

Barrie Wexler, Executive Vice President of Risk Management at Paramount Global underscores this theme, “An example of a unique consideration includes a player signing a new deal and suddenly there is a ransom threat. Or, an actor travels overseas into a political unrest climate - now there is a whole new level of preparedness and execution that has to occur.”

How does preparedness play a factor in environments where predictability is non-existent?

In the entertainment industry, there is no predictable outcome, so preparation on the front is the ONLY option. With every filming situation at Paramount Global, Wexler added, “where remote, limited access, and location permanency are consistent variables, we have to continuously ask ourselves a variety of questions to ensure we are ready.” Those questions include:

- What is the duration we plan to be at the designated location?
- What resources do we need for this production?
- What transportation do we need?
- What types of injuries could we foresee?
- What physician specialties might we need?
- What unique conditions apply (weather, elements, conditions, etc.)?



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What types of reinforcements are needed (state/local agencies, clinical, proximity to hospital)?

Is onsite clinical needed?

Are there national or global challenges at play?

By answering these important questions up front, teams are better prepared to process each unique scenario that may occur. As Wexler expertly comments, “We hope for the best, but we plan for the worst.”

How does human behavior impact risk management in entertainment and sports?

First, there are unique employee bases, including project-based employees, players/talent, spectators, personnel, security, and the broad spectrum of potential exposure and risks associated with each. Human behavior adds to unexpected risk. Anticipating above “normal” threats and assessing immediate and future needs are critical. Entertainment and sports has to consider things that many other industries do not. For instance, ingress and egress, visibility, and crowd response psychology are areas often trained for. Jahnke plays off the new understanding of why escalators are off at the end of a concert or large stadium event. “Likely, it was the risk manager trying to manage the flow of traffic safely and mitigate possible safety hazards,” added Wexler.

Wexler continued with a quip about the human psyche involving filming at a large awards show where the staged studio audience had to wait outside in the heat with little to no water for hours pre-show. When a bike rack fell over, the whole crowd, having already been tense and physically challenged, erupted into a chaotic scene thinking gunshots had been fired. People react differently when basic human needs are taxed or limited, such as heat, cold, water, or food - hope for the best and plan for the worst.

Navigating the return to work, tracking progress, and caring from a distance is different than more traditional risk environments.

Wexler shared, “Production to production you face varying challenges, including union environments and regulations, providing care globally from a distance, creating safety for talent exposure, and more. If talent is injured on the job, it doesn’t just affect their personal return to work, the entire production can be halted and the whole crew affected.” Jahnke added, “We have to weigh the cost of proper care against the cost of the entire production going dark. For instance, in one production, our team had to consider swift approval for an underwater treadmill to rehabilitate a major motion picture actor who had been injured during filming. The treatment authorized in that scenario would not be allowed in a more traditional work comp scenario.”

It all comes down to strong planning, exceptional communication, skillful execution, and the ability to pivot on the fly. We can learn something from the industry we idolize. Recap and evaluation are critical. Asking the hard questions on the front- and back-end of each situation ensures award-winning success.

ABOUT EK HEALTH SERVICES

EK Health Services Inc. is a leading national workers’ compensation managed care organization. EK Health restores quality of life for injured workers through innovative, cost-effective solutions, while providing client services with high-touch experiences, customizable solutions, lower costs, and proven results. Our holistic approach integrates the best people, processes, and technology to facilitate the best medical treatment available for return-to-work possibilities.

Learn more about EK Health’s solutions at www.ekhealth.com.

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