



## INSURANCE MANAGEMENT

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### 4 technician risks, and how to mitigate them

By Gamble Cuce

A tumultuous economy, ever-changing weather and climate patterns, and the upcoming presidential election have created a rocky road for the pest control industry. That's according to *Pest Management Professional (PMP)* magazine's [2024 State of the Industry Report](#). One of the top challenges pest management professionals (PMPs) face is employee retention. Securing reliable workers who are interested in pest management as a career rather than a short-term job was cited as a top reason for talent shortages.

With good employees in short supply, protecting and retaining existing pest control workers is more important than ever.

Pest control technicians are exposed to various elements as they travel from job site to job site and enter different homes and locations. Here are five of the top risks we see at Brownyard in the form of common workers' compensation claims, with some tips on how you can handle them:

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## **1. Motor vehicle accidents (MVAs)**

Whether in a personal or company vehicle, any technician driving from client to client is at risk for MVAs. As technology advances, there are also more instances of distracted driving annually, and other hazards caused by seasonal weather and construction.

With rising hazards on the road, you should ensure all your drivers are fully trained in defensive driving techniques, and knows what to do if an accident occurs. If you have a fleet of vehicles, ensure they are maintained and in good working order before any employee gets behind the wheel.

Finally, encourage regular communication and accountability through strategies like mandatory check-ins from drivers between service calls to ensure someone always knows where a driver is.

## **2. Slips and falls**

As technicians make house calls to residential and industrial areas, they often encounter new spaces with unfamiliar terrain, contributing to slip, trip and fall claims. Navigating new areas leaves them open to the possibility of an incident from potential hazards such as loose wires, carpet, furniture and other obstacles.

When entering new locations or taking on new clients, they should conduct a walk-through of the space if possible. If that's not possible, they should encourage clients to share any details about the space that will help them navigate it more safely.

Other ways you can help minimize slip-and-fall incidents include:

- Training technicians to look for and avoid potential hazards
- Providing them with breaks in between jobs and for lunch to avoid exhaustion
- Assigning more than one tech to a job when necessary, such as during height work, wildlife control or bee eradication



### **3. Head and back injuries**

Head and back injuries can occur when technicians treat tight areas such as crawlspaces and attics or reach high spaces such as roofs or ceilings.

Management can work to avoid such injuries by selectively choosing job assignments. For example, don't assign a crawlspace job to a 6-foot tech. Be mindful of weight limits when assigning jobs that require ladders or scissor lifts.

You also should regularly provide training on proper ladder usage and resources to protect against injuries such as helmets and ladder supports.

### **4. Bites**

Perhaps the most specific workers' compensation claim we see in the pest control industry are bite injuries. These incidents can quickly become exacerbated, particularly insect bites and stings that appear minimal at first and rapidly turn into complex reactions over time.

Most technicians know to identify and be mindful of pests (and sometimes, customers' pets) with dangerous bites. However, it's a good idea to provide additional training around what to do if a tech is bitten. Additionally, each technician should be provided with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against bites and stings such as long-sleeved shirts, gloves, closed-toe shoes and protective eyewear.

## Planning for the future

Finding reliable talent can be challenging in the current climate of the pest control industry and beyond. Minimizing risk, treating staff well and retaining existing talent are smart strategies for business owners. They should seek to gain a thorough understanding of the risks their employees face to best protect them.

Partnering with an insurance specialist can help minimize risks, as an experienced specialist can help identify the top risks your employees may face and provide tips and insights to mitigate them.

Finally, offering competitive benefits, rewarding employees for their hard work, and maintaining high safety standards will go a long way toward retention, too.



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