



## **Injury Prevention**

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) reported that approximately 81,000 firefighters in the United States were injured during 2002 at a cost of \$3–8 billion. One third of all firefighters are injured in the line of duty and the incidence of injury is 4.7 times greater for firefighters when compared to workers in the private sector. Forty nine percent of all injury retirements for firefighters are related to the back. West Metro has deviated from the national norm by addressing low back and “core” related injuries with aggressive preventative programs, rehabilitative programs, education, and by producing a national awarding winning “core strength and flexibility” video. The video has been dispersed to over five hundred departments nationally.

### **Our Approach**

West Metro Fire has forged the fire industry by reporting one of the lowest national compensable claims per employee ratio, loss ratio, and workers' compensation modifier from 2006 through 2010. West Metro Fire is the only fire department in the state of Colorado with an in-house rehabilitation model that slashes costs to the taxpayer while ensuring an optimal full body approach to injury rehabilitation. The injury rehabilitation program expedites “return-to-work” timeline for injured workers minimizing labor costs, overtime, and operational staffing concerns. The program decreases private sector medical billing, absenteeism, and re-injury.

### **What Does this Mean to our Citizens?**

Hard dollar savings in excess of a \$250,000 per year have been documented through lower workers' compensation premiums, reduced lost work time, absenteeism, overtime costs related to injury/illness, deferred medical billing through in-house rehabilitation, and in-house administration of exercise and dietary prescriptions. West Metro Fire has eliminated 75% of compensable claims in the last decade with a rapidly aging and expanding workforce.