

Ted Strickland, Governor
Gary M. DiCeglio, *Chairperson*
Jodie M. Taylor, *Member*
Kevin R. Abrams, *Member*
Christa D. Deegan, *Executive Director*

NEWS RELEASE

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The Industrial Commission of Ohio **Launches Video Hearings**

Innovative Initiative to Save More than \$200,000 per Year

COLUMBUS – To increase efficiency while saving hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in Ohio workers' compensation premiums, the Industrial Commission of Ohio (IC) has launched video hearings.

The first video hearings were conducted between the Portsmouth and Columbus IC offices on June 24, 2010. Now, video hearings are being held three days per week. By the end of July, the IC plans to have video equipment installed in its Cambridge, Logan and Cincinnati offices as well.

Over the next ten (10) years, the use of video hearings in place of hearing officer travel will save the IC more than \$2 million dollars in travel expenses. Besides the substantial cost savings, there are many other benefits of video hearings:

- Reduce state pool car use, allowing the IC to move state cars to areas with a greater need;
- Allow hearing officers in one IC office to handle hearings for another office. This will spread the workload evenly and allow for quick docket reassignments due to hearing officer illnesses or emergencies;
- A docket could list hearings for one location per day, or hearings could be conducted for multiple locations in a workday;
- Productivity will increase because hearings may be held during the time that hearing officers would have spent traveling;
- Hearing cancellations due to bad weather will decrease since hearing officers will no longer have to travel to other offices.

“Once video hearings are in full swing at these five offices, we are going to look at adding video hearings to our Mansfield and Lima offices as well”, says IC Executive Director Christa D. Deegan.

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A video hearing is exactly the same as a regular IC hearing with one exception: Instead of the hearing officer being in the room, there will be a video monitor. The hearing officer will still be able to see and hear everything that takes place in the hearing room.

“Video hearings in our Portsmouth office have been favorably received by the public, and our hearing officers are able to better utilize their work hours,” says Mrs. Deegan. “Our goal is to make the convenience of video hearings available to serve our customers across the state.”

The IC conducts hearings on disputed workers’ compensation claims, determines violations of specific safety requirements, and determines if an injured worker is permanently and temporarily disabled due to a work-related injury or occupational disease. We conduct over 180,000 hearings annually and most hearings take place within 45 days of the original claim appeal. Three Governor-appointed Commissioners lead the agency -- headquartered in Columbus -- which has five regional and seven district offices throughout the state.

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