## WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD

#### STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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JUDD GLOVER,

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Case No. ADJ665716 (BAK 0154393)

OPINION AND DECISION AFTER RECONSIDERATION

# **ACCU CONSTRUCTION;** FIRST COMP OMAHA,

vs.

Defendant(s).

Applicant,

We previously granted defendant's petition for reconsideration to further study the factual and legal issues in this case. This is our Opinion and Decision After Reconsideration. Defendant sought reconsideration of the January 26, 2009 Findings & Award, wherein the workers' compensation administrative law judge (WCJ) found, in pertinent part, that applicant, while employed on June 8, 2006, as a laborer/heavy equipment operator, sustained industrial injury to his head, brain, psyche, and eye. The WCJ found that applicant has been adequately compensated for all periods of temporary total disability through June 22, 2008. He found that applicant's injury of "June 6, 2008" was a "high-velocity eye injury" within the meaning of Labor Code section 4656(c)(3)(F), and that, as a result of his injury of "June 6, 2008," applicant has been temporarily totally disabled during the period from "June 23, 2008," to the present and continuing. The WCJ awarded temporary disability indemnity from June 23, 2006, to the present and continuing, further medical treatment, and an interim attorney's fee.

Defendant contended that the WCJ erred in finding that applicant sustained a high-velocity eye injury and that, even if he did, there is no nexus between the eye injury and applicant's extended temporary disability. Defendant also requests correction of clerical errors regarding the

date of injury. Although the issue was not raised by the parties, defendant also responded to the WCJ's discussion, in the Opinion on Decision, of the Labor Code section 4656(c)(3)(C) amputation exception as an alternate ground for extended temporary disability benefits, by contending that: 1) the medical evidence does not show, and defendant does not concede, that applicant's tear duct was removed, and 2) even if it was, removal of a tear duct would not constitute an amputation, pursuant to the definition set forth in *Cruz v. Mercedes-Benz of San Francisco* (2007) 72 Cal.Comp.Cases 1281 (Appeals Board en banc).

We have considered the Petition for Reconsideration and applicant's Answer, and we have reviewed the record in this matter. The WCJ prepared a Report and Recommendation on Petition for Reconsideration (Report), recommending that we correct the clerical errors. We have not considered and have discarded the inappropriate attachments to defendant's petition.

For the reasons expressed by the WCJ at pages 1-10 of his Report, which we adopt and incorporate (we do not adopt and incorporate the remainder of the Report, beginning with the discussion, at page 10, of the "Second Issue"), and for the reasons discussed below, we will correct the clerical errors, defer the issues of additional temporary disability indemnity and attorney's fees, otherwise affirm, and return the matter to the trial level for development of the record and further proceedings to determine whether applicant's continuing temporary disability is caused, to any extent, by his high-velocity eye injury, thus entitling him to additional temporary disability indemnity.

Labor Code section 4656(c) provides in full:

- "(c)(1) Aggregate disability payments for a single injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004, causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 104 compensable weeks within a period of two years from the date of commencement of temporary disability payment.
- (2) Aggregate disability payments for a single injury occurring on or after January 1, 2008, causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 104 compensable weeks within a period of five years from the date of injury.

- (3) Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2), for an employee who suffers from the following injuries or conditions, aggregate disability payments for a single injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004, causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 240 compensable weeks within a period of five years from the date of the injury:
  - (A) Acute and chronic hepatitis B.
  - (B) Acute and chronic hepatitis C.
  - (C) Amputations.
  - (D) Severe burns.
  - (E) Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
  - (F) High-velocity eye injuries.
  - (G) Chemical burns to the eyes.
  - (H) Pulmonary fibrosis.
  - (I) Chronic lung disease."

Defendant admits injury to "the nose, head, brain, psyche and a midline shift of the right eye as a compensable consequence but den[ies] a direct impact to the right eye." (Minutes of Hearing and Summary of Evidence, p. 2.) Defendant does not appear to dispute that the injury was "high-velocity." Rather, its argument is that injury was not sustained to the "eye," defined narrowly by defendant to mean the eyeball only. We are not persuaded that "eye" should be defined so narrowly, yet we need not delineate the outer limits of our definition at this time. We have examined applicant's medical records and find ample evidence of injury to and treatment of the right eye. The nursing and physician emergency records both contain diagrams indicating eye injury. That this eye injury may have been overshadowed by the damage caused as the metal fragment continued its path through applicant's brain does not negate the existence of his eye Defendant selectively cites descriptions of applicant's injury which do not include injury. discussions of the eye, or which mention the undamaged structures and functions of the eye. Defendant ignores those parts of the record that show laceration, repair, medication, and other treatment, with respect to the eye. We agree with the WCJ's determination that applicant did sustain a high-velocity eye injury, and with the reasons explained in his Report.

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Resolution of the second issue, whether there must be a nexus between the specific exception in section 4656(c)(3) and the reason for the extended temporary disability, and whether that nexus has been demonstrated in this case, requires a deeper analysis of the statutory language. Defendant argues that, "there must be a nexus between the injury or condition and the applicant's current disability status. Therefore, Defendants contend that even if the Board finds that the Applicant suffered a 'high velocity eye injury', the Applicant is not entitled to an extension of temporary disability beyond the 104 weeks since his current temporary disability is not a result of his vision problems, but the result of a brain injury which does not fall under Labor Code Section 4656 exception." (Petition for Reconsideration, pp. 8-9.)

### Defendant argues:

"Statutory phrases are not to be read in isolation, rather, they must be examined in the context of the entire statute so that its different parts may be harmonized. (State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Company v. Garamendi (2004) 32 Cal. 4th 1029, 1043 [88 P.3d 71, 12 Cal. Rptr. 3d 343]). Labor Code Section (c)(3) reads,

"...For an employee who suffers from the following injuries or conditions...causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 240 compensable weeks within a period of five years from the date of the injury..." (Petition for Reconsideration, p. 8.)

While we agree with the need to harmonize the various parts of the statute, defendant's attempt to break down section 4656(c)(3) grammatically does not hold up to close examination and does not resolve the issue. Defendant reads the phrase "causing temporary disability" as modifying "injuries or conditions," and this reading would require that the enumerated exception be the cause of the continuing temporary disability. However, the language "aggregate disability payments for a single injury...causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than..." in subdivision (c)(3) is identical to the language in subdivisions (c)(1) and (c)(2). A more natural and consistent reading of subdivision (c)(3) is that "causing temporary disability" modifies "a single injury," and defendant does not dispute that applicant's temporary disability was caused by his "single injury."

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It does not necessarily follow, however, that any injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004, to an employee suffering from one of the enumerated injuries or conditions, causing temporary disability, entitles the employee to temporary disability indemnity beyond the two-year/104-week cap.

In Foster v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (2008) 161 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 1505 [73 Cal.Comp.Cases 466, 469-470], another case involving interpretation of section 4656, the Court of Appeal reviewed the applicable principles of statutory construction:

"In construing a statute, our primary task is to 'ascertain the intent of the Legislature so as to effectuate the purpose of the law.' (Dyna-Med, Inc. v. Fair Employment & Housing Com. (1987) 43 Cal.3d 1379, 1386 [743 P.2d 1323, 241 Cal. Rptr. 67] (Dyna-Med); see Sacramento County Office of Education v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (2000) 82 Cal. App. 4th 107, 113 [97 Cal. Rptr. 2d 699, 65 Cal. Comp. Cases 672].) To determine legislative intent, we begin with the language of the statute, giving the words their usual and ordinary meaning. (Nolan v. City of Anaheim (2004) 33 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 335, 340 [92 P.3d 350, 14 Cal. Rptr. 3d 857]; California Teachers Assn. v. Governing Bd. of Rialto Unified School Dist. (1997) 14 Cal.4th 627, 633 [927 P.2d 1175, 59 Cal. Rptr. 2d 6711.) We read the language in context (Prachasaisoradej v. Ralphs Grocery Co., Inc. (2007) 42 Cal.4th 217, 227 [165 P.3d 133, 64 Cal. Rptr. 3d 407, 72 Cal. Comp. Cases 1238]) and in harmony with the statutory framework as a whole. (Chevron U.S.A., Inc. v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (1999) 19 Cal.4th 1182, 1194 [969 P.2d 613, 81 Cal. Rptr. 2d 521, 64 Cal. Comp. Cases 1]; Gee v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (2002) 96 Cal. App. 4<sup>th</sup> 1418, 1427 [118 Cal. Rptr. 2d 105, 67 Cal. Comp. Cases 236].) Where uncertainty exists in the language, we give consideration 'to the consequences that will flow from a particular interpretation. [Citation.]' (Dyna-Med, supra, at p. 1387.) 'Both the legislative history of the statute and the wider historical circumstances of its enactment may be considered in ascertaining the legislative intent. [Citations.]' (*Ibid.*)

"We liberally construe all aspects of workers' compensation law in favor of the injured worker." [Citation.] "[T]he so-called 'liberality rule,' " however, (which is found in section 3202) "cannot supplant the intent of the Legislature as expressed in a particular statute." [Citation.] If the Legislature's intent appears

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from the language and context of the relevant statutory provisions, then we must effectuate that intent, "even though the particular statutory language 'is contrary to the basic policy of the [workers' compensation law].' "[Citations.]' (Kopping v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (2006) 142 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 1099, 1106 [48 Cal. Rptr. 3d 618, 71 Cal. Comp. Cases 1229].)"

In Foster, the applicant had sustained two specific injuries — an injury to his right shoulder on February 23, 2005, and an injury to his neck, right elbow, and right shoulder on April 13, 2005. He was unable to work after April 13, 2005, due to the effects of both injuries. The WCJ found applicant entitled to two periods of temporary disability indemnity pursuant to section 4656(c)(1): the first from April 14, 2005, to September 25, 2006, when the first injury reached maximal medical improvement, and the second starting September 26, 2006, after the first period ended. The Appeals Board granted reconsideration and agreed that applicant was entitled to two periods of temporary disability indemnity because he sustained two injuries. Contrary to the finding of the WCJ, however, the Appeals Board found that, to the extent the periods of temporary disability run concurrently, the respective two-year/104-week limitations of section 46565(c)(1) also run concurrently. Hence, applicant was not entitled to temporary disability indemnity for his second injury beyond two years from the first payment of temporary disability benefits for that injury. Since the payments made by defendant were for both injuries and were first made on April 26, 2005, applicant was entitled to temporary disability indemnity only until April 26, 2007. The Court determined that the Appeals Board correctly interpreted section 4656(c)(1) and affirmed our decision.

The Court said,

"The language of section 4656(c)(1) is as follows: 'Aggregate disability payments for a single injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004, causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 104 compensable week within a period of two years from the date of commencement of temporary disability payment.' (Italics added.) Thus, the language itself ties the temporary disability indemnity limitations period for any single injury to the temporary disability caused by that injury and starts the limitations period on the date of commencement of the temporary disability payments for such disability." (Foster, supra, 73 Cal.Comp.Cases at pp.

## 470-471.) (Footnote omitted.) (Underlining added.)

In Foster, the Court discussed the history of section 4656 and the changes accomplished by Senate Bill (SB) 899.

"Then in 2004, as part of the sweeping overhaul of the workers' compensation laws effected by Senate Bill No. 899 (2003-2004 Reg. Sess.), the former provisions of section 4656 were designated as subdivisions (a) and (b) while subdivision (c)(1) was added to impose an even more restrictive 104-week/2-year limitation on temporary disability indemnity payments applicable to both partial and total temporary disability for a single injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004. (Stats. 2004, ch. 34, § 29.) Subdivision (c)(2)[11] was added to continue the 240-week/five-year limitation for an employee who suffers from certain specifically enumerated injuries or conditions. (*Ibid.*)

Senate Bill No. 899 was enacted as urgency legislation '[i]n order to provide relief to the state from the effects of the current workers' compensation crisis at the earliest possible time[.]' [Stats. 2004, ch. 34, § 49.) It was 'designed to alleviate a perceived crisis in skyrocketing workers' compensation costs.' (Brodie v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (2007) 40 Cal.4<sup>th</sup> 1313, 1329 [156 P.3d 1100, 57 Cal.Rptr. 3d 644, 72 Cal. Comp. Cases 565].) This makes it likely the Legislature intended the new limitations period in section 4656(c)(1) to be a significant narrowing of liability." (73 Cal.Comp.Cases at pp. 471-472.)

Section 49 of SB 899 provides,

"This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are: [¶] In order to provide relief to the state from the effects of the current workers' compensation crisis at the earliest possible time, it is necessary for this act to take effect immediately." (Stats. 2004, ch. 34, § 49.)

Like the Court in Foster, the Appeals Board considered the Legislature's intent, as expressed in section 49, in amending section 4656. We noted, in Hawkins v. Amberwood Products

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> After further amendment of section 4656 in 2007, for injuries occurring on or after January 1, 2008, the exceptions previously contained in subdivision (c)(2) are now found in subdivision (c)(3).

(2007) 72 Cal.Comp.Cases 807, 815 (Appeals Board en banc), "the workers' compensation . . . reforms [of SB 899] were enacted as urgency legislation to drastically reduce the cost of workers' compensation insurance," quoting Costco Wholesale Corp. v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (Chavez) (2007) 151 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 148 [72 Cal.Comp.Cases 582, 587]. We concluded, "By placing a limit of 104 weeks of temporary disability indemnity within two years from the date that payment commences, the Legislature has furthered the goal of SB 899 to 'provide relief' from the workers' compensation 'crisis' and to reduce workers' compensation costs." (Hawkins, supra, 72 Cal.Comp.Cases at p. 815.)

Bearing in mind the principles discussed above, we must now ascertain the Legislature's intent when it authorized temporary disability benefits beyond the two-year/104 week cap of subdivision (c)(1) for employees with extended temporary disability, who suffer from one of the enumerated injuries or conditions. We believe the Legislature's intent in enacting section 4656(c)(3) was that "aggregate disability payments for a single injury occurring on or after April 19, 2004, causing temporary disability shall not extend for more than 240 compensable weeks within a period of five years from the date of the injury" when the industrial injury, or the condition resulting from the industrial injury, is one of the injuries or conditions specified in subdivisions (c)(3)(A) through (I), and the specified injury or condition is causing the continuing temporary disability. The specified injury or condition need not be the sole cause. If it is a contributory cause, the employee is entitled to the extended benefits. (Cf. Granado v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd. (1970) 69 Cal.2d 399 [33 Cal.Comp.Cases 647]; Gray v. Moss Lighting (1978) 43 Cal.Comp.Cases 586 (Appeals Board en banc).)

This interpretation recognizes that the statutory language ties the temporary disability indemnity period to the temporary disability caused by the injury, as discussed in *Foster*. It effectuates the Legislature's intent to allow a continuation of benefits for employees with certain specifically enumerated injuries or conditions, by extending those benefits when the specifically enumerated injury or condition causes temporary disability to persist, and the interpretation is also consistent with the general intent to narrow liability.

Having determined that applicant's eye injury must be causing or contributing to applicant's continuing temporary disability, in order for him to be entitled to extended payments, we now consider whether that causation has been demonstrated. Applicant argues, "The psyche injury is a compensable consequence of the high velocity eye injury...." (Answer to Petition for Reconsideration, p. 6.) The WCJ says, at page 13 of his Report,

"Applicant has not returned to work, nor has it been shown that suitable modified or alternative work was available to him. Applicant does not appear to be able to perform his pre-injury work functions safely as a result of his impaired vision. Amended Summary of Evidence 12/18/2008 (Partial Transcript p. 5 lines 14-20.[)] Indeed, the employer's objection to the 'volunteer duties' Applicant performed at the Center for Neuro Skills appears to have been the risk for secondary injury, for which they understandably did not desire to be liable. Amended Summary of Evidence 12/18/2008 (Partial Transcript p. 7 lines 8-20).

Thus, it is not an accurate statement of the record to indicate that Applicant's ongoing temporary disability is entirely the result of the damage to his brain. Injury to his eye and eyesight, while they may be permanent and stationary when considered in isolation, nevertheless contribute to the compensable consequences of Applicant's psychiatric disability, which is not yet stabilized."

The testimony referred to by the WCJ is applicant's explanation that physical labor, such as swinging with picks, would be dangerous for him. Applicant conceded, however, that no doctor has certified him as temporarily disabled in the last six months as a result of any eye problem.

Thus the record establishes that applicant believes certain tasks would be dangerous because of his impaired vision. The WCJ concluded that applicant's injury to his eye and eyesight contributes to his inability to work and to the compensable consequence of his psychiatric disability. Given applicant's horrendous injury, these beliefs and conclusions seem reasonable; but they are not yet proven. There is evidence that applicant is temporarily disabled on a psychiatric basis, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether applicant's eye injury is contributing directly to his ongoing temporary disability, or whether his psychiatric compensable consequence is in part due to the eye injury. Resolution of these issues requires expert medical opinion, in

addition to applicant's testimony.

Labor Code sections 5701 and 5906 authorize the WCJ or the Appeals Board to obtain additional evidence, including medical, at any time during the proceedings. (*Tyler v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd.* (1997) 56 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 389 [62 Cal.Comp.Cases 924, 926]; *McClune v. Workers' Comp. Appeals Bd.* (1998) 62 Cal.App.4<sup>th</sup> 1117 [63 Cal.Comp.Cases 261, 263]; *McDuffie v. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority* (2002) 67 Cal.Comp.Cases 138 (Appeals Board en banc).) Because the record is incomplete on the causes of applicant's current temporary disability, we will return this matter to the trial level for development of the record and for a new finding by the WCJ on whether applicant's eye injury is contributing, to any extent, to his continuing temporary disability. This is not an apportionment issue. If applicant's eye injury, the existence of which is affirmed by this decision, is found to be a contributing cause of applicant's ongoing temporary disability, the WCJ may reissue his award of continuing temporary disability indemnity.

Accordingly, we will affirm the findings that applicant sustained a high-velocity eye injury and that he continues to be temporarily disabled, a finding defendant does not dispute. We will return the matter to the trial level for development of the record on the issue of his entitlement to extended temporary disability indemnity. Medical reporting will be necessary to determine whether applicant's current temporary disability is, to any extent, due to his eye injury and/or whether his psyche injury and consequent disability is, to any extent, due to the eye injury. We will, therefore, defer the issues of entitlement to additional temporary disability indemnity and attorney's fees. The WCJ should issue a new decision on those issues after development of the record and such further proceedings as he deems appropriate.

We will also amend the decision to reflect the correct date of injury. We note that the WCJ's Report also contained a clerical error in his recommended correction.

Finally, despite his thorough discussion of the issue, the WCJ acknowledges in his Report that the amputation issue was merely mentioned by him in passing and, assuming applicant's tear duct was removed, "the loss of the tear duct is not sufficient to independently justify the use of the

1 240 week limitation as an 'amputation' within the meaning of Lab.C. §4656{c}(3)[C]." (Report, 2 p. 16.) In light of our en banc decision in Cruz v. Mercedes-Benz of San Francisco, supra, 72 3 Cal.Comp.Cases 1281, this conclusion appears to be correct; but, as the issue was not raised or 4 litigated by the parties, we will not discuss it further. 5 For the foregoing reasons, 6 IT IS ORDERED, as the Decision After Reconsideration of the Workers' Compensation 7 Appeals Board, that the January 26, 2009 Findings & Award is AFFIRMED, EXCEPT that it is 8 **AMENDED**, as set forth below: 9 Findings of Fact Nos. 5, 6, and 7 are amended, as follows: 10 FINDINGS OF FACT 11 5. As a result of the industrial injury of June 8, 2006, Applicant Judd Glover has been 12 temporarily totally disabled during the period from June 23, 2008, to the present and 13 continuing. 14 6. The industrial injury of June 8, 2006, was a high-velocity eye injury, within the 15 meaning of Labor Code section 4656(c)(3)(F). 16 7. The issues of entitlement to additional temporary disability indemnity and attorney's 17 fees are deferred. 18 /// 19 /// 20 /// 21 /// 22 /// 23 /// 24 /// 25 /// 26 /// 27

1 2	The Award is amended, as follow:  AWARD
3	Amond is made in force of Auglicent Yorld Clause and accinet Defendant Vincinia Court
4	Award is made in favor of Applicant Judd Glover and against Defendant Virginia Surety Insurance Company, administered by First Compensation Insurance Company, of:
5	Such additional and further medical treatment as may be reasonably necessary to cure or
6	relieve Applicant from the effects of his industrial injury.
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9	WORKERS' COMPENSATION APPEALS BOARD
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11	GREGORY G. AGHAZARIAN
12	I CONCUR.
13	NEATION
14	MA CO
15 16	JAMES C. CUNEO
17	
18	Alura Love
19	DEIDRA E. LOWE
20	DATED AND FILED AT SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
21	JUN 15 2009
22	SERVICE MADE BY MAIL ON ABOVE DATE ON THE PERSONS LISTED BELOW AT THEIR ADDRESSES AS SHOWN ON THE CURRENT OFFICIAL ADDRESS RECORD:
23	
<ul><li>24</li><li>25</li></ul>	FIDEL MARTINEZ STOCKWELL, HARRIS, WIDOM, WOOLVERTON & MUEHL
26	JUDD GLOVER

GLOVER, Judd