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### Hiring Handicapped Persons Is No Handicap

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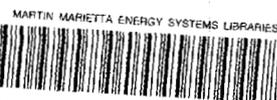
Personnel Division

## Hiring Handicapped Persons Is No Handicap

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Date Published: December 1987

Oak Ridge National Laboratory  
P.O. Box X  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831  
operated by  
MARIN MARIETTA ENERGY SYSTEMS, INC.  
for the  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY  
under contract DE-AC05-84OR1400



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## **HIRING HANDICAPPED PERSONS IS NO HANDICAP**

A suggestion to a supervisor to consider hiring an applicant having a handicap might go something like this:

Supervisor: "Why should I hire this person? He's handicapped!"

Personnel Director: "Well, why shouldn't you?"

Supervisor: "What about on-the-job safety? What about attendance? I just wouldn't know what to expect!"

These concerns are justifiably felt by employers for all employees. Unfortunately for persons having handicaps, employers may erroneously assume that these concerns apply more to them than to the nonhandicapped. Employers, like many others, may see only the handicap and fail to see the person and his/her qualifications. To answer these and other concerns of managers about hiring handicapped persons, Union Carbide Corporation-Nuclear Division (UCCND), now Martin Marietta Energy Systems, Inc. (Energy Systems), began a study of the performance of handicapped vs nonhandicapped employees.

Similar studies have been carried out by several major industries, as well as government agencies; although results vary, handicapped employees always rate at least as high, and sometimes higher, in performance than nonhandicapped employees.

The Energy Systems study is based on the following types of personnel records:

1. absences resulting from on-the-job injury,
2. absences because of sickness,
3. personal-leave absences,
4. turnover rate, and
5. job performance.

## **SAMPLING**

The sample groups consisted of 1108 (41 handicapped) employees hired in 1979, and 916 (33 handicapped) employees hired in 1980. Because record keeping before 1979 was inconsistent, the 1979 and 1980 data are the most reliable at hand. Only employees having permanent disabilities were classified as handicapped; the majority of handicapped hires were self-identified. Each group was followed through 1981.

The sample profile (Table 1) indicates clearly that more handicapped individuals are hired into weekly and hourly job classifications than monthly and that more are hired into clerical and service classifications than professional.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The percentage of employees in each of three categories for handicapped 1979 and 1980 hires is listed in Table 2.

**Table 1. Hiring profile, 1979 and 1980**

	1979		1980	
	Handicapped (%)	Nonhandicapped (%)	Handicapped (%)	Nonhandicapped (%)
<b>Payroll</b>				
Monthly	15	28	10	24
Weekly	51	49	57	57
Hourly	34	23	33	19
<b>Job Classification</b>				
Managers	0	0	0	2
Professionals	20	33	17	35
Technicians	2	8	9	10
Clerical	46	25	37	26
Skilled Workers	17	22	6	15
Semiskilled	3	3	0	3
Unskilled	0	1	3	0
Service Workers	12	8	28	7
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	57	63	57	60
Female	43	37	43	40

**Table 2. Percentage of hires in each handicapped category**

	1979	1980
Self-identified	51	67
Known	36	23
Medically identified	13	10

- *Self-identified handicapped* persons include all handicapped persons who have identified themselves as handicapped, regardless of whether they would fit into either of the other handicapped categories.
- *Known handicapped persons* are those who have obvious handicaps (deafness, blindness, diminished or difficult mobility, etc.) but have not identified themselves as handicapped.
- *Medically identified handicapped persons* are those who are neither self-identified nor obviously handicapped but have been identified by the Medical Department.

## RESULTS

### Safety

Supervisors should always be concerned about the safety of their employees. When the employee has a handicap, this concern is often heightened. Most of the concern of supervisors about the

safety of handicapped employees stems from a feeling of not knowing what to expect or how to accommodate individual handicaps to make the work environment safe. To determine whether 1979- and 1980-hired employees having handicaps were more accident prone than 1979- and 1980-hired nonhandicapped employees, the number of days absent resulting from on-the-job injury for both groups was analyzed. The results are shown in Table 3.

Although the data show that handicapped employees missed fewer days because of on-the-job injury in all cases, overall there was no significant difference in days missed by handicapped vs nonhandicapped employees.

## **Absenteeism**

### **Sick leave**

Absenteeism because of sickness is another concern that supervisors perceive to be problematic among employees having handicaps. Our data (Table 4) indicate that although handicapped employees did miss more days because of sickness than did nonhandicapped employees, the difference was not statistically significant.

### **Personal leave**

Supervisors may also be concerned about absenteeism in the form of personal leave for handicapped vs nonhandicapped employees. Guidelines for personal leave include professional appointments such as medical or legal. The data for this category of absenteeism, as summarized in Table 5, show that

- handicapped employees had both higher and lower absenteeism for personal leave in isolated cases
- significantly greater personal-leave absenteeism was seen in the nonhandicapped group
  - in the 1980-hired group for the year 1980 and
  - in the 1980-hired group for 1980 and 1981 averaged.

## **Turnover**

Do handicapped employees leave their jobs more frequently than nonhandicapped employees? The common belief that handicapped persons can't or don't stay in positions, thereby increasing the turnover costs of the employer, is not substantiated by our data, shown in Table 6. Again, in isolated cases, the data for handicapped employees were higher or lower than the nonhandicapped group; however, no significant difference between the groups was seen with regard to turnover.

## **Job Performance**

Hourly employees are hired for a 90-d probationary period. All persons having handicaps hired for hourly positions satisfactorily completed this trial period and were placed on permanent payroll. Formal performance appraisals are not conducted for bargaining-unit (hourly) employees.

Performance reviews are required for all salaried (weekly and monthly) employees. In an attempt to present meaningful data on the performance of handicapped employees, performance

Table 3. Absence as the result of on-the-job injury

	1979			1980			1981			1979-80		
	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference
1979 hires												
Handicapped	0.0	0.0	none	0.2	0.15	none	0.72	4.48	none	0.23	1.45	none
Nonhandicapped	0.7	1.88	none	0.08	1.51	none	0.37	6.61	none	0.17	3.26	none
1980 hires												
Handicapped				0	0	none	0	0	none	0	0	none
Nonhandicapped				0.2	0.54	none	0.12	1.91	none	0.07	1.16	none

<sup>a</sup> $\sigma$  = standard deviation.

Table 4. Absence as a result of sickness

	1979			1980			1981			1979-80		
	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference
1979 hires												
Handicapped	2.02	3.14	none	12.64	25.66	none	12.10	22.76	none	8.73	16.92	none
Nonhandicapped	2.19	8.11	none	5.40	12.90	none	7.16	16.11	none	4.79	12.18	none
1980 hires												
Handicapped				5.75	13.04	none	6.82	10.58	none	6.24	11.91	none
Nonhandicapped				2.18	6.97	none	4.87	12.00	none	3.39	9.24	none

<sup>a</sup> $\sigma$  = standard deviation.

Table 5. Absences for personal leave

	1979			1980			1981			1979-80		
	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference	Mean	$\sigma^a$	Significant difference
1979 hires												
Handicapped	0.59	1.19	none	1.86	2.27	none	1.64	2.21	none	1.34	1.87	none
Nonhandicapped	0.66	1.34	none	1.50	2.27	none	1.25	2.05	none	1.12	1.86	none
1980 hires												
Handicapped				0.45	1.04	none	1.24	1.92	none	0.7	1.44	none
Nonhandicapped				0.79	1.65	-2.02	1.21	1.95	none	0.98	1.79	-3.73

<sup>a</sup> $\sigma$  = standard deviation.

Table 6. Numbers and percentages of employees leaving payroll

	1979			1980			1981			1979-80		
	Number	Percentage	Significant difference	Number	Percentage	Significant difference	Number	Percentage	Significant difference	Number	Percentage	Significant difference
1979 hires												
Handicapped	2	4.2	p <0.01	4	8.8	none	5	13.0	none	11	8.7	none
Nonhandicapped	467	28.5	p <0.01	131	11.1	none	108	10.0	none	706	16.5	none
1980 hires												
Handicapped				9	21.4	-1.98	3	8.7	none	12	15.1	none
Nonhandicapped				495	34.2	-1.98	119	12.1	none	614	23.2	none

data for 1985 and 1986 were analyzed for the 1979- and 1980-hired employees having handicaps. Before 1985, performance appraisal data were subjective. Recently, performance appraisal has been systematized and revised to increase reliability. Performance is ranked on the following scale: distinguished (superior), 1; consistently exceeds (outstanding), 2; consistently meets (good), 3; needs improvement, 4; and unsatisfactory, 5.

Percentages of persons having handicaps in each performance category are listed in Table 7. This comparison shows that the performance ratings of handicapped employees are not significantly different from those of nonhandicapped employees.

**Table 7. Percentages of persons having handicaps in each performance category**

	1	2	3	4	5
1985	0	25.71	74.29	2.86	0
1986	0	34.29	63.86	0	2.86
Nonhandicap distribution	3-7	20-30	62-75		1.2

## CONCLUSION

Persons having handicaps have been more likely to be hired into hourly and weekly job categories than into professional categories. The extent to which this selectivity reflects the qualifications of applicants rather than prejudicial categorization of handicapped persons is unknown. Only 5% of all handicapped high school graduates enter college, as compared with 34.3 % of nonhandicapped high school graduates,<sup>1</sup> thus decreasing the availability of handicapped applicants for professional jobs.

The data presented here on absenteeism from on-the-job injuries, illness, and personal leave and on frequency of turnover indicate that concern about these matters is no more justified in considering handicapped persons for employment than nonhandicapped persons. An interesting statistic is the increase in absences for both groups in the second year of employment. Turnover data indicate that employees who leave do so in the largest numbers during their first year of employment.

These results should not be construed to mean that the supervisor of a handicapped person has never had nor ever will have a problem with safety, attendance, or turnover; the results do suggest that these problems are no greater for handicapped than nonhandicapped employees.

When evaluating handicapped applicants for employment, potential employers may tend to expect more from them than from nonhandicapped individuals. People having handicaps are like everyone else—fat, thin, bright, not-so-bright, cheerful, glum, etc., and they want to be treated, as nearly as possible, just as nonhandicapped individuals are treated.

This is how that conversation at the beginning of this report should end:

Supervisor: "Why should I hire this person? He's handicapped!"

Personnel Director: "Why? Because he's qualified!"

This discussion and these data should help supervisors focus on qualifications of handicapped individuals and should ease their minds about other common concerns relating to hiring people who have handicaps. The record shows emphatically that UCCND's 1979 and 1980 handicapped hires certainly have not been a handicap for us!

## **REFERENCE**

1. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1987*, 107th Ed., Washington, D.C., 1986.



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