

What should young workers do if they have an accident?

Young workers are often unaware of what to do if they have an accident and of what rights they have under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and the *Workers Compensation Act*. All workers, including young and part-time workers, are entitled to workers' compensation benefits and services in the event of a work injury or illness. These benefits can include compensation for lost wages and medical costs for such services as hospital care, health care providers, medication, and surgery.

If injured, young workers should follow these three important steps, even if they think the injury is minor:

1. Report any injury to their supervisor or first aid attendant immediately.
2. Get medical treatment, if required. A doctor or other health care professional can best determine how to treat an injury.
3. Follow up with the employer to make sure a Report of Injury Form 7 is sent to the WCB if medical treatment is required or if the worker is unable to perform his or her work because of the injury.

Who is responsible for young workers' safety?

The safety of young workers is everyone's job. Everyone has a part to play – unions, employers, supervisors, co-workers, parents, educators, the WCB, the community at large, and young workers themselves. Each of these groups of

people has a distinct and direct role to play.

- **Unions:** Unions can help to keep youth safe on the job by ensuring young workers' rights are upheld in the workplace.
- **Employers:** Employers are ultimately responsible for safety in their workplace. They are required to meet all health and safety requirements, to have proper supervision in place, and to ensure young workers have the necessary training and equipment to do their jobs safely.
- **Supervisors:** Supervisors are usually responsible for providing safety training. They also are the ones who give ongoing guidance and supervision on the job.
- **Co-workers:** Co-workers should lead by example and follow safe work procedures. They should not put young workers at risk by asking them to do tasks for which they have not received safety training.
- **Parents:** As the main providers of care, parents need to talk to their children about health and safety at their jobs, as they would discuss other health and safety concerns. Parents should never assume that their children are safe on the job. Parents should encourage young workers to ask questions and seek help when they are uncertain about safe work activities or practices.
- **Educators:** Educators are in a unique position to offer guidance to students concerning health and safety from an early age. Instructional materials for kindergarten to grade 12 are available from the WCB. These materials are recommended by the Ministry of Education and can be integrated into many areas of study.
- **Other community members:** Workplace safety concerns us all. Even if we are not directly involved in the workplace or with young people in other areas, we all have a

responsibility to raise awareness about preventing workplace accidents by fostering a culture where young worker safety is a high priority.

- **Young workers:** Young workers need to work safely. To do this, they need to know the safety procedures for their jobs, and they need to be trained to follow them. If they aren't given training or instructions, they need to ask. They must follow the procedures and should encourage others to do so.

What role does the WCB play in young worker safety?

The WCB is responsible for promoting health and safety in the workplace. The first priority of the WCB is to prevent on-the-job injury and disease. WCB officers investigate serious workplace accidents; work with employers, supervisors, and workers to help them comply with regulations for health and safety in the workplace; and inspect worksites to make sure they comply with WCB requirements.

Since 1989, young workers have been a focus of the WCB's injury prevention efforts. The following list describes some of the WCB prevention initiatives and resources that provide young workers, employers, educators, and the public with information about keeping young workers healthy and safe on the job.

Prevention Programs

- **Student WorkSafe:** Through the Ministry of Education's Career and Personal Planning Program, all students in grades 10 to 12 may receive five hours of occupational health and safety information developed by the WCB and taught by teachers. *Student WorkSafe* is also being offered in kindergarten to grade 9 classes

throughout the province. Here, the program aims to help students develop skills to recognize and correct hazards before beginning any task.

- **Injured Young Worker Presentations:** Throughout the year, injured young workers are available to speak to high school students, industry associations, labour groups, workers, and community groups across the province. They talk about their accidents and explain why young people should make workplace health and safety a priority.
- **Communications Campaign:** As young people begin summer employment or permanent jobs, the WCB raises awareness of workplace health and safety with a province-wide publicity campaign aimed at youth, their employers, and other stakeholder groups.
- **Workplace Safety Blitz:** During the summer, WCB officers visit workplaces that employ large numbers of young workers to increase employer and worker awareness of hazards faced by young workers.
- **Research:** The WCB conducts ongoing research with young people and stakeholders on why and how young workers are injured on the job and what can and should be done to reduce the risks young workers face. The WCB also conducts data analysis on time-loss claims to help shape the focus and direction of young worker initiatives.
- **Other Initiatives of the WCB:**
 - funding industry training and education initiatives that target young workers
 - conducting community outreach initiatives that target young workers through sponsorship and participation in youth, community, and industry events

The WCB has the responsibility for protecting young workers through the enforcement of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. In addition to the general prevention activities that make the workplace safer for all workers, the WCB is involved in specific interventions targeted at young workers.

Protecting Young Workers Focus Report

Resources

- **Young Worker and Workplace Injuries:** This comprehensive research study outlines the underlying attitudes of youth and other stakeholders about why and how young workers get injured on the job and what can or should be done to address the risks they face today in the workplace.
- **Protecting Young Workers Focus Report:** This research report outlines the scope and causes of young worker injuries and provides recommendations for preventing workplace injuries and disease.
- **3 Steps to Effective Worker Education and Training:** This guide provides an orientation program for young workers. It has been designed to help employers and supervisors keep young and new workers safe on the job.
- **Videos, brochures, posters, information cards,** and information bulletins are available for use at schools, job sites, or the home.

To order any of the above resources, or a catalogue of WCB publications and videos available to employers and workers, call the WCB Publications and Videos Section at 604 276-3068, or toll-free at 1 800 661-2112, local 3068.

More Information

If you have questions on workplace health and safety and the young worker, call the WCB Prevention Information Line at 604 276-3100 or toll-free at 1 888 621-SAFE (7233).

Visit the WCB web site for news and information from the WCB.

worksafebc.com



R5/02

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IF YOU'RE YOUNG AND YOU WORK, YOU'RE AT SPECIAL RISK

Young workers are especially vulnerable to workplace injuries, and it doesn't matter what industry they work in. We all have a part to play in helping young workers work safely.

Who are young workers?

There are more than a quarter of a million young workers in British Columbia, ranging in age from 15 to 24. Many are high-school, college, or university students who hold part-time jobs while attending school and who take on full-time jobs during summer months. Others work full-time, usually in entry-level jobs, and are just beginning their climb up the work ladder. They work in many areas—from fast-food businesses and retail clothing stores to construction and tree planting.

These young people share one thing in common—they are at high risk of being injured on the job. Their injuries range from minor to serious, can range from short-term effects to long-term disabilities, and sometimes result in death.

Why focus on young workers?

What makes young workers different? Aren't accidents and injuries a hazard for all ages? The answer, of course, is yes. But a number of work-related facts raise special concerns about young workers.

- More than 50% of accidents involving young workers occur during the worker's first six months on the job. This is much higher than the percentage of accidents involving workers over age 25 during the same time period.
- Males under 25 are much more likely to be injured on the job than any other workers.

Every working day in B.C., about 44 young workers are injured on the job, and every week about five of these workers will be permanently disabled.

Why are injuries to young workers so high?

There is a common belief that young people feel they are invincible and indestructible so they take risks, thinking they won't be hurt. Although some young people may act this way, this behaviour is not as widespread as people believe. There are a number of other reasons for the high injury rate of young workers:

- As new workers, young people are likely to be inexperienced and unfamiliar with many of the tasks required of them. They are probably unable to recognize workplace hazards.
- Often they don't get the proper training or supervision to do their jobs safely.
- Many of their positive traits (such as enthusiasm, energy, and eagerness to please) often lead them to take on tasks they are not prepared for.

- Young workers are often reluctant to ask for help and guidance or to question work practices for fear of losing their jobs or appearing incapable of doing them properly. They are often unaware of their rights as workers.
- Many young workers come to jobs tired after putting in a whole day at school or at another job. Also, some tasks might be beyond the physical ability of some young workers to do safely.
- Young workers trust their employers and more experienced co-workers to look after them, while often employers and senior co-workers will unintentionally put them at risk by giving them the more difficult, boring, risky, or physically-challenging jobs.

“[You] accept whatever you're told; [you] need the job and don't want to risk losing it.”

“[We're] not told how to do our jobs, just told to do them.”

Youth participants at a WCB young worker focus group

What kind of injuries happen to young workers?

Most people think of workplace injuries as something that happens to those doing physical labour. It is true that work in areas such as construction, forestry, and manufacturing results in more serious injuries for young workers, and this is why these industries are considered hazardous. But the majority of young workers work in the hospitality and retail service industries, and many injuries also occur there.

Injuries that happen to young workers range from the less severe and short-term, such as strains, cuts, and bruises, to the more serious ones that may have longer-term consequences, such as concussions, burns, and amputations. In between are acute injuries that result in short-term disabilities, such as broken bones and dislocations.

The following table shows the main types of accidents that occur to young workers in specific industries.

The table shows that some types of accidents happen more often than others. To help prevent these and other accidents, workers need to be aware of their surroundings and to work safely.

For example:

- Overexertion (MSI)* : Workers should be shown how to bend and lift properly and be provided with proper equipment. They should always use a step or ladder when objects need to be put on or taken down from a high shelf. Workers may need assistance to lift or move something heavy or awkward. Most of all, they should be encouraged to ask for help whenever they need it.

It doesn't occur to them [young workers] that being a cook in a fast-food restaurant could be dangerous. Until they get third-degree burns to their hands in a grease fire . . . have a finger severed by a knife . . . or permanently injure their back by falling on a freshly washed floor.

Roberta Ellis, Vice-President, Prevention, WCB

- Struck by an object: Workers should be careful and cautious when working in crowded areas and at a fast pace. They should wear any required safety gear at all times. All tools and equipment should be stored safely when not in use.
- Falls, trips, and slips: Workers should wear appropriate and comfortable footwear. Floor and stair areas should always be clear and dry. Workers should watch for and report potential dangers such as power cords, spills, and tears in carpet.

Industry	#1 Type of Accident among Young Workers	#2 Type of Accident among Young Workers
Accommodation/Food Services (includes hotels, motels, restaurants, fast-food)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)	Contact with a hot object (burns caused by contact with stoves/ovens, flames, services) hot utensils/dishes, or hot foods)
Retail Stores	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)
General Construction	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)
Wood/Paper Product Manufacturing	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)
Other Services (includes car washing, laundries, auto service and repair, homemaker services)	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)
Metal Product Manufacturing	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)
Transportation Services (includes water transport, general trucking, bus lines)	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion),	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)
Forestry	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or other materials)	Falls (injuries caused by falls from stairs, ladders, vehicles, and structures)
Wholesale Businesses	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)
Food/Beverage Product Manufacturing	Overexertion MSI* (injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion)	Struck by an object (injuries caused by falling, hanging, or airborne tools, equipment, or other materials)

* MSI (musculoskeletal injuries) are injuries from lifting, pushing or pulling, or repetitive motion