

Student Handout

Supervising

A supervisor is a person who instructs, directs, and controls workers in the performance of their duties — **even if they don't have the title of supervisor.** Often workers are asked to take on a supervisory role, for example “show the new guy what to do”, or “get Joe to help you”. This makes you a supervisor, even without the title, and it carries a lot of responsibility with it.

If you work in a supervisory capacity you must meet the standard of “due diligence”. This means that you must take all reasonable care to ensure the health and safety of the workers under your supervision. You must know your responsibilities and have the authority and ability to carry them out. You must also know and comply with workplace health and safety regulations that apply to your workplace.

Topics you should know about include:

- The hazards associated with the jobs you are supervising.
- How to train and supervise other workers.
- How to encourage all workers, particularly young workers and new workers, to ask for help when they are unsure of a task.
- How to evaluate equipment to ensure it is functioning properly, and work practices to ensure workers are doing their jobs safely.



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You may be put in the position of supervising new and young workers who are inexperienced and unable to recognize hazards. Many new and young workers won't ask questions about workplace health and safety for fear of looking incompetent or simply because they don't know what to ask.

If you are asked to supervise a new worker:

- Spend time making sure they understand why the task is performed in a certain way.
- Demonstrate tasks as often as possible.
- Make sure the workers are capable of performing new tasks safely before leaving them to perform the work alone.
- Check on them periodically, reassuring them frequently that they can ask the supervisor if they are uncertain or have any questions.
- All workers have the right to refuse unsafe work.
 - Supervisors have the right to refuse to direct workers to perform work they consider unsafe.
 - Workers **must not** be disciplined for refusing to perform a task they have reasonable cause to believe is dangerous.

If you do agree to be a supervisor, be a role model and lead by example. The safety of others is in your hands.

