

What parents can do for their kids' safety

You can play an important, supportive role in your child's workplace safety, before and after the job begins. A good place to start is educating yourself about on-the-job health and safety using the resources listed at the back of this brochure. And remember, no matter what kids say, they do need their parents' guidance.

PREPARE YOUR CHILDREN

Before your children start working:

- Talk to them about the risk of workplace injury.
- When your children go for job interviews, encourage them to ask about the safety training they can expect.

ONCE THEY START WORK

Ask questions about:

- Their duties, so you hear problems or concerns and are alert for anything they're not up to.
- The safety training and supervision being provided.
- What they think about any on-the-job hazards.

Offer Support

- Encourage your children to think through the job and identify risks.
- Watch for signs that the job is physically or mentally demanding.
- Tell them to check with their supervisors before doing anything that feels unsafe. And remember, your children have a legal right to refuse unsafe work.
- Support reporting unsafe practices and situations to their employer or, if necessary, to the WCB.

Model safety at home

- Use protective equipment when mowing the lawn and using power tools.
- Apply proper techniques when lifting or moving heavy or awkward objects.
- Wear the right gear for recreational activities, like bicycle helmets and lifejackets.

Take Action

- Raise the issue of young worker safety with local youth and parent groups.
- Talk to other parents with working children.
- Get involved in programs promoting young worker health and safety.

Keeping young workers safe — it's up to all of us

Young worker safety is actually a shared responsibility. Employers, unions, co-workers, parents, educators, youth, the community, and the WCB all have a role to play.

The WCB works with a variety of partners on young worker safety initiatives such as awareness campaigns, education and outreach programs, and advisory groups.

Together, we're all helping to reduce young worker injury rates.



"We all have to work on this, to see that our kids are prepared when they go to work, and to make sure they and their employers understand all their rights and responsibilities."

— Steve Barnett, WCB Vice President,
Program Design Division

Resources for parents and young workers

More information about young worker safety is just a mouse click or a phone call away.

- Visit the WCB young worker web site at <http://youngworker.healthandsafetycentre.org>.
- Call the WCB Prevention Information Line at **604 276-3100**, toll-free at **1 888 621-7233**.
- For information on employment standards, visit the Ministry of Skills Development and Labour web site at www.labour.gov.bc.ca/esb/. Or call toll-free **1 800 663-3316**.

Keeping young workers safe — it's up to all of us.



www.WorkSafebc.com

Is your child safe at work?



DON'T COUNT ON IT

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ... AND NEVER TAKE FOR GRANTED

What's happening to young workers?

As a parent, you always put your child's safety first. But what happens when your son or daughter goes off to work?

In the next hour, someone's child will be injured on the job in British Columbia. By the end of the day, one will be permanently disabled.

You may assume employers will look out for young workers ... or think your child's job is a "safe" one. Even if you're uneasy about your child's work, it may seem that you don't have a role to play.

That's not true, as you'll see in this brochure from the Workers' Compensation Board of B.C. (WCB). It tells parents how to help their children stay safe at work.

Dangerous myths about young people at work

MYTH #1: Young workers are at no more risk than other workers.

FACT: Workers aged 15 to 24 years have the highest injury rates in B.C. More than half their accidents happen in the first six months on the job, about a third in the first 30 days. Young men are the most likely to be hurt on the job.

Eager to please, young workers typically lack the experience to judge what's safe or unsafe. Some are convinced nothing bad can happen to them. Others lack confidence and don't question what happens at on the job.

Other factors also affect the safety of young workers. Often, they:

- Receive little or no safety training or supervision
- Are assigned physically demanding or dangerous tasks
- Must use equipment or machinery designed for adults
- Don't know their rights and responsibilities
- Are distracted or tired by juggling school, homework, a job, and family and social life
- Feel rushed and pressured to get things done

"Oh, so I don't have to just worry about joy-riding on Friday night. I have to worry about when they go to work on Monday morning or after school. The workplace can be a really dangerous place. I want parents to know that."

— Kathleen Higgins of Delta
Her son, John, broke his back working at a recycling plant.
He was 16.



MYTH #2: Only jobs like construction and forestry put young workers at risk.

FACT: Don't assume your child is safe, no matter what the job. Most kids start working in "safe" jobs in restaurants, supermarkets, and retail stores. But they record the highest number of injuries to young workers, the most common injuries coming from:

- Pushing or pulling, causing back sprain and strains
- Getting hit by a falling object
- Contact with a hot object
- Falls, trips, and slips



"It may be just fingers, but it's a part of yourself. I don't know any other girls who've lost their fingers."

— Jennifer Fourchalk of Surrey
She lost her fingers working in a pizza restaurant.
She was 19.

MYTH #3: Injuries to young workers are usually minor.

FACT: Simple strains, cuts, and bruises do heal quickly. But young workers also suffer severe injuries — like fractures and dislocations — that result in short-term disability.

Worse, they can and do have accidents leading to amputations, spinal injuries, third-degree burns and more. These can mean lifetime impairment, disfigurement, and disability.



"I don't think any parent wants to get that phone call in the middle of the night ... saying they're not going to tell you what his condition is, but that you'd better get down there. I could only imagine that it was pretty serious or he would've called me himself."

— Kate Rowbottom of Mission
Her 18-year-old son, Michael, lost his leg in a sawmill accident.

MYTH #4: Young workers have no health and safety rights. They can get fired for speaking up.

FACT: B.C. workers of any age are protected by the *Workers Compensation Act*. This law requires every employer to provide a safe workplace, adequate training and supervision, and properly maintained and functioning safety equipment.

Workers also have the right to know about workplace dangers, to participate in health and safety activities, and to refuse work they believe is unsafe. It's illegal to fire or discipline someone for reporting a work-related safety issue. Anonymous reports can be made to the WCB at 604 276-3100 (in the Lower Mainland) or toll-free to 1 888 621-7233.

Not just a right, workplace safety is also a responsibility. This means young workers should:

- Follow safe work procedures to protect themselves and others
- Use safety equipment and protective clothing
- Immediately correct or report safety problems to their supervisors or employers (or to the WCB, if necessary)
- Ask their supervisors for help and training before starting any unfamiliar task



"Here was my son, so proud to be driving a forklift. It didn't occur to me to ask, 'Does he know what he's doing?'"

— John Higgins Sr. of Delta
A forklift crushed his 16-year-old son, John, during a shift at a recycling plant, breaking his back and rupturing his spleen.