

CONSTRUCTION

Employers like you hire more than 23,000 young workers across our province¹. From 15 to 24 years old, they work in a variety of jobs on all kinds of sites, but mainly in residential construction.

Like young workers in most industries, those in construction are generally productive and eager to please — but with more than their share of compensation claims. Making up a bit more than 16 percent of our construction labour force, young workers accounted for 37 percent of its time-loss claims in 2004. They recorded \$46 million in claim costs² and more than 171,000³ days lost from work in the five years ending 2004.

How are they hurt?

Based on 2000–2004 compensation statistics, these are the top three safety issues facing our young construction workers.

- 28 percent of their injuries involved being hit by objects — for \$8 million in claim costs and 31,000 days off the job.
- 20 percent of young worker injuries came from overexertion — for \$5 million in claim costs and 28,000 days lost.
- 15 percent of their injuries were caused by falls from heights — for \$14.8 million in claim costs and 44,600 days lost.

Another key issue is exposure to asbestos. Its ill effects are difficult to detect immediately and typically don't appear for 20 years or more. But this is an important issue for young workers involved in renovation, maintenance and some industrial jobs. Without effective prevention of exposure to asbestos, they face a high death rate in later years from asbestosis and lung cancer, averaging more than a dozen fatalities annually.

Why does this happen?

A major factor is who we're dealing with. Too often, young workers:

- ▶ Lack proper safety training
- ▶ Don't know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to workplace safety
- ▶ Aren't aware of on-the-job risks or how to protect themselves
- ▶ Take risks because of an it-won't-happen-to-me sense of being invincible
- ▶ Want to impress employers and so don't ask questions for fear of looking incompetent or losing their jobs

What can you do about it?

Remember those characteristics of young workers when putting procedures in place to comply with health and safety requirements. For most construction operations, this means:

- ◆ Providing comprehensive training to make sure young workers recognize hazards and know how to handle them

- ◆ Training managers and supervisors to give young workers the instruction and direction they need, and following up to see how everyone's doing
- ◆ Creating an environment that recognizes and rewards safe behaviour, and encourages young workers to ask questions about their safety concerns

None of this is hard, and it all pays off. Keeping young workers safe and healthy keeps them productive, and it adds to your bottom line.

WorkSafeBC can help

Check these resources online at www2.worksafebc.com/Safety/Home.asp. Click on "Construction" for material specific to your industry or on "Young Worker" for more general information.

Safe Work Practices for House Construction — A manual of general information on the safety requirements for various phases of house construction.

Construction Safety Series — A pamphlet covering safe ladder use and working safely on roofs.

Personal Fall Protection — An introduction to different personal fall protection systems.

Asbestos Hazards in Demolition, Renovation, and Salvage — A bulletin outlining likely locations and patterns of asbestos use in older homes.

General resources

Lost Youth Video — Four seriously injured young British Columbians discuss their on-the-job accidents and the permanent after-effects for them and their families. The stories of four lives forever altered are told through dramatic accident recreations and interviews with the young people and their parents.

The Supervisor Video — This docudrama examines the supervisor's responsibilities for workplace health and safety. It's the graphic depiction of the emotional, legal, and financial consequences of the death of a young worker.

Be a Survivor Magazine — Targeting teen workers, this colourful publication offers useful tips and on young worker safety. It's also a great resource for anyone in touch with youth: parents, educators, employers, and labour and community groups.

Getting a Job? Ask Questions about Safety — Created with the help from members of WorkSafeBC's Young Worker Advisory Group, this simple document contains practical tips on how to raise concerns about safety in the workplace.

¹ Source: Statistics Canada 2004 Labour Force Historical Review CD, CD1, Table Cd1T05an, Catalogue No. 71F0004XCB

² Claim cost paid represents total health care payments, short term disability payments, vocational rehabilitation payments, long term disability reserves and one-time cash awards, and survivor benefit reserves and one time cash awards charged in the year regardless of the year of injury

³ Total days lost represent total short term disability days and rehabilitation income continuity days paid in the year regardless of the year of injury