

Training and orientation for young and new workers

An employer's guide to the amendments in Part 3 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

Why specific requirements for young and new workers?

Young and new workers need special attention because they are at more risk of injury than their older or more experienced counterparts. The injury rate for young workers, especially young male workers, is much higher than that of the overall population.

Most employers know that it can be costly and time-consuming to hire and train workers, especially if you're running a small business. Once you've hired and trained new workers, it pays to keep them safe and on the job. New amendments to Part 3 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation will help you do just that.

These amendments — which come into effect July 26, 2007 — describe orientation and training requirements for young and new workers. Employers have had these responsibilities before, but for the first time they are collected in one place and detailed in clear, concise language. This backgrounder will tell you what you need to know about these requirements.

Orientation and training are essential

More than half of workplace accidents involving young and new workers occur during their first six months on the job. Providing effective orientation and training is the best way to prevent accidents. As an employer, you are responsible for ensuring that your workers are prepared for the job before they start working.

Training must be specific to the workplace and should be an ongoing process. Even an experienced worker will require a new orientation if circumstances change or new hazards develop. For example, there may be a new work process or new equipment; or the worker may be moved to a new work location or assigned to a different task.

Where do I find the amendments?

Look in sections 3.22 to 3.25 (“Young or New Workers”) of the Regulation. For a searchable online version of the Regulation and its accompanying Guidelines, visit WorkSafeBC.com.

Who are young workers and new workers?

A *young worker* is any worker who is under 25 years of age. A *new worker* can be any age, and includes workers who are:

- new to the workplace
- facing hazards that have changed or developed while they were at work or absent from work
- in a new workplace or location that has different hazards than the old one

How to conduct an orientation

There are four basic steps to any training or orientation session.

Step 1: Evaluate the situation

First decide what areas the worker needs training in. Compare the worker's job description to the Worker Orientation Checklist. If there is no job description, this would be a good time to write one. If this is the first time you've oriented the worker, plan for a thorough training session. If you are re-orienting the worker, you probably won't need to do the complete orientation — just focus on the topics that relate to the new situation or new hazards.

It's a good idea to prepare a handout sheet for workers with contact information for supervisors and first aid attendants, as well as where to find more information about worker rights and responsibilities in the Regulation.

Step 2: Train the worker

Sit down with the worker and go over the checklist. You should walk around to show them emergency exits and first aid facilities, and to demonstrate specific work procedures. (You can do this yourself or assign someone else to do it.)

A typical orientation should take anywhere from one to four hours. In a higher-risk workplace such as a sawmill, the orientation may take a full day. An effective orientation should make workers aware of potential hazards and let them know who to talk to if they have questions about health and safety in the future.

Step 3: Test the worker

Make sure the worker understands the training. Test worker knowledge by asking questions about specific procedures (for example, how to clean the grill and dispose of hot oil) or general requirements (for example, when and where they need to use personal protective equipment). Follow up later — ask workers questions within a few days and periodically over the next month or two.

Step 4: Keep records of the orientation

Be sure to document all training. An orientation checklist will help ensure that you have covered all the key topics when training a new worker. Give copies of the checklist and other relevant materials to the worker and keep copies for your own records.

Serious statistics

- Every day, 30 young workers are injured — that's one worker every 48 minutes.
- Every week, 5 young workers are permanently disabled as a result of workplace injuries.

Why are young workers injured on the job?

- Inexperience and lack of training
- Lack of confidence or understanding of their rights as workers
- Lack of preparation for the workplace
- Lack of supervision
- Asked to do more dangerous jobs
- Sense of youthful invincibility
- Unwillingness to ask questions