

## RETAIL

Employers like you hire more than 75,000 young workers across our province<sup>1</sup>. From 15 to 24 years old, they work in general retail, gas bars, supermarkets, department stores, and home improvement centres.

Like young workers in most industries, those in retail are generally productive and eager to please — but record a significant share of compensation claims. Making up almost 30 percent of our all retail employees, young workers recorded \$19.6 million<sup>2</sup> in claim costs and more than 172,000<sup>3</sup> 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 retail workers.

- 32 percent of their injuries were caused by overexertion, mainly from activities like improper lifting — for \$4 million in claim costs and more than 56,000 days lost from work.
- 32 percent of their injuries resulted from being struck by small tools like box cutters and from striking objects like boxes and equipment — for \$3.5 million in claim costs and more than 34,000 days lost.
- 13 percent of their injuries followed falls — for \$3 million in claim costs and more than 21,000 days lost.

### 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 retail 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](http://www2.worksafebc.com/Safety/Home.asp). Click on "Small Business" and at the next page on "Retail" for material specific to your industry or on "Young Worker" for more general information.

*Health and Safety Guide for New Retail Workers* — For people considering jobs in retail, information on working safe and their rights and responsibilities around workplace health and safety.

*Health and Safety Guide for Retail Small Business* — For retail employers with fewer than 20 workers, information on basic WorkSafeBC requirements and how to set up a health and safety program (includes sample forms and checklists).

*Health and Safety for Retail: Prevention Tips* — A simple tool with prevention tips on proper lifting techniques, working alone, and shoplifting and robbery situations.

*Back Talk: An Owners' Manual for Backs* — Information on how the back works, with tips for avoiding injuries and, if one occurs, how to care for the back while recovering.

*Warehousing Posters* — A series of seven posters on the most common hazards in retail warehouses.

### **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.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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

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