

RETAIL INDUSTRY AND WCB PARTNER TO REDUCE INJURIES TO YOUNG WORKERS

VICTORIA, BC, May 29, 2002 – Today, at The Bay in downtown Victoria, the 8th annual young worker safety awareness campaign was launched as major retail organizations and Human Resources Development Canada joined with the Workers' Compensation Board to emphasize to their members and the public the unique safety needs of young workers. Similar events were held at The Bay in downtown Vancouver and Kelowna.

Speaking at the Vancouver event, Mark Startup, President and CEO of Retail BC said, "The retail sector is the place where many young people have their first jobs. The health and safety attitudes and habits they learn in these first workplaces will be carried through their working lives."

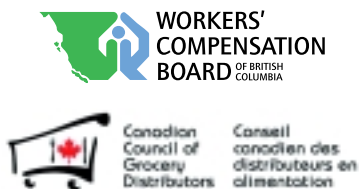
Data released by the WCB showed that every hour in British Columbia two young workers are injured in workplace accidents. Last year in B.C. more than 10,500 young people were injured on the job and many more injuries went unreported. Every working day, 42 young workers are hurt on the job and every week, five of these workers are permanently injured. In 2001, five young workers were killed.

Almost 55,000 young workers were injured in BC from 1997 to 2001. The three industries where young workers are injured the most are also the three largest employers of young people - restaurants, supermarkets and general retail. The 2002 Young Worker awareness campaign is focussing on workers in the retail sector, which includes supermarkets, retail stores, and other general retail. Common injuries to young retail workers are musculoskeletal injuries, being struck by an object and falls.

While the claims data released show that the injury rate for young workers is now below the general provincial rate, young male workers aged 15 – 24 are still 60 per cent more likely to be injured on the job than any other age group.

Speaking on behalf of injured young workers twenty-year-old paraplegic Nick Perry says he remembers November 3, 2001 clearly. A load of lumber being moved with a forklift fell on him, doubling him forward at the waist and breaking his back.

"They pulled the lumber off me quickly, but all I could feel was the pain in my back," he said. Nick was transported to a local hospital, then transferred to Vancouver General Hospital's spinal unit that day. He is now confined to a wheelchair and is undergoing physiotherapy in Victoria.



“While we’re pleased to see a reduction in the injury rate year-over-year for young workers, we still have to be vigilant in making sure that young people are well trained and properly supervised when they enter the workplace,” said Roberta Ellis, Vice President of Prevention at the WCB. “Workplace safety is a shared responsibility – and all of us, workers, employers, supervisors, parents, educators, and unions must work together to sustain the improvements that are being made.”

“Many young workers have their first jobs in supermarkets, warehouses or other retail workplaces, and many are not prepared for the risks inherent in their jobs” said Peter Newman, WCB Regional Manager for Vancouver Island. “More than half of the accidents involving young workers happen in the first six months on the job. We are working together with industry to help reduce the rate of injuries to younger workers.”

As part of the launch Cimarron Corpé, Hire-A-Student supervisor with Human Resources Development Canada, spoke of the need for employers to respond to young people seeking summer employment and of the Hire-A-Student offices that have opened for the summer in the metro Victoria area.

The WCB has a wide range of resources and information available specifically created to help young people and their employers create safe workplaces. To order booklets, posters, reports or other information call Publications and Videos at the WCB at (604) 276-3068 or toll-free in BC at 1 800 661-2112, local 3068 or visit the Board’s website at www.worksafebc.com.

Serving nearly two million workers and about 170,000 employers, the Workers’ Compensation Board is a statutory agency governed by a Panel of Administrators. The WCB is committed to a safe and healthy workplace and to providing return-to-work rehabilitation and fair compensation to workers injured and suffering occupational disease as a result of their employment.

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